

READ FOR PLEASURE

BOOK V

I. D. MISRA
J. C. CHAUDHARY
S. K. PRANAMI

General Editor
(Km.) S. K. RAM

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NCERT

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Foreword

One of the aims of education is to bring about an integration of the intellectual, emotional and ethical aspects of human personality. In order to fulfil this aim, several things need to be done. One way is to encourage the learner to develop his ability of intelligent and imaginative reading. This series of supplementary readers is designed to promote in the child a love for reading, by exposing him to materials which should cater to his needs and interests.

These books have been developed by the English faculty of the National Council of Educational Research and Training working in the National Institute of Education (NIE) and the four Regional Colleges of Education. I thank Km. S. K. Ram of the Department of Education in Social Sciences and Humanities of the NIE for working as General Editor of the series. My thanks are due to the English staff of the Regional College of Education, Ajmer, for preparing 'Read for Pleasure—Book V'.

We sincerely welcome the comments and suggestions of teachers and students in the light of which we would like to improve the next edition of the book.

New Delhi
25 January 1981

SHIB K. MITRA
Director
**National Council of
Educational Research and Training**

Introduction

'Read for Pleasure—Book V' is designed as a supplementary reader and constitutes an integral part of the English course. It aims at :

- (a) instilling in the pupil a taste for reading,
- (b) further developing in him the ability to read English with ease and facility, and
- (c) reinforcing and revising the language items learnt and strengthening the pupil's mastery over them by presenting them in different meaningful contexts.

This book is for the eighth year of English and is based on the syllabus in English being followed in the Kendriya Vidyalayas. The book contains different literary genres like fables, legends, anecdotes, stories on contemporary themes and plays. A conscious attempt has been made to select a wide variety of themes which should interest the pupil of this age-group. Adventure, romance, wit and humour are, therefore, given prominence. Illustrations have been included to make the book more attractive. It is suggested that the stories be read silently. New words will not obstruct comprehension as they have been glossed in footnotes. Each lesson is followed by exercises in comprehension. They underscore the main points of the lesson and also guide the learner to read the text intelligently and critically. This, it is felt, will highlight the educative value of reading. To motivate the pupil to read extensively a list of 'Suggested Reading' is given at the end of each lesson. If the book prompts the pupil to go to the library and read on his own, the purpose is served.

Acknowledgements

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1. 'The Three Surprises' by Joan E. Cass (Adapted)
2. 'A Secret for Two' by Quentin Reynolds (Adapted)
3. 'The Dragon Who Grew' by Joan E. Cass (Adapted)
4. 'The Two Corporals' by Val Gielgud (Adapted)
5. 'The Brave Hunter' by G. Archibong
6. 'The Poles' by Willy Ley (Adapted)
7. 'A Hero' by R. K. Narayan (Adapted)
8. 'The Divided Horsecloth' by Bernier (Adapted)
9. 'The Great Truth' by Johann Petel Hebel (Adapted)
10. 'The Star Ducks' by Bill Brown (Adapted)
11. 'You Can't Kill the Spirit' by Terry and Harriet King (Adapted)
12. 'Exploring the World' by L. F. Hobley (Adapted)
13. 'The Wonderful Story of the Coconut' Edited by Charles Ray (Adapted)
14. 'The World Outside' by Barbara Holland

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1. The Thrée Surprises¹

Once upon a time there was a little boy. He had lots of toys to play with and books to look at. But when the spring sun shone through his window and the sky was as blue as a kingfisher's² wing, he grew tired of all his things.

When his mother came into the room he said to her, "Mother, what shall I do? I don't want to play with my toys or look at my books any more today." And his mother, who could always think of lovely things for little boys to do, said, "Go out into the sunshine and follow the path of the blowing wind across the meadow³ to the wood and see if you can bring me back three surprises."

So the little boy took his basket and went out into the spring sunshine. He followed the blowing wind across the meadow and it whispered and sang in his ears.

"O wind," said the little boy, "I wish I knew what you were saying; perhaps you could tell me where I could find a surprise to put in my basket and take home to my mother?"

The wind blew and blew as if it wanted to be understood. Then it went winging⁴ its way ahead, and as it passed by it dropped a surprise



¹ things that fill one with wonder

² a small, brightly-coloured bird, living near streams and feeding on fish

³ a piece of greenland

⁴ flowing

at the little boy's feet. There, curled⁵ like a tiny half-moon was a feather — a black, red-tipped feather. When he picked it up it lay in his hand, soft as silk, light as air, warm as spring sunshine. He put it carefully into his basket and called out to the speeding wind, "Thank you, wind, for my first surprise."

Then he went on into the little wood. Last year's leaves, russet⁶ and brown, lay about his feet on the path but the trees were green-tipped and the birds were singing.

"O birds," said the little boy, "I wish I knew what you were saying. Perhaps you could tell me where I could find a surprise to put in my basket and take home to my mother?" The birds sang sweetly and clearly as if they wanted to be understood and a fat thrush⁷ flew hurriedly out of a hawthorn⁸ bush.

Then, all at once, the little boy saw lying there on the mossy ground under the hawthorn tree, a surprise — two pale blue halves⁹ of a thrush's broken egg. A baby bird had shed them for he no longer needed their protection. They lay like two tiny, empty cups waiting to be filled. Breathlessly, in case they should break, the little boy picked them up and put them in his basket beside the feather. Then he called out to the busy, singing birds, "Thank you, thank you, birds, for my second surprise."

Then he went on through the wood to where the trees ended and the whole world seemed to lie at his feet. White clouds like wandering sheep were filling the distant sky and drifting¹⁰ across the sun. "O clouds and sun," said the little boy, "I wish I knew what you were saying ; perhaps you would tell me where I could find a surprise to put in my basket and take home to my mother." The clouds moved slowly past as if they wanted to write a message¹¹ in the sky and the little boy sat down on the soft, sandy ground under the last, tall pine tree. All at once, a little shaft¹²

⁵ having the shape of a circle

⁶ a yellowish- or reddish-brown colour

⁷ a common singing bird

⁸ a thorny bush or tree with clusters of white, pink or red blossoms and small red berries

⁹ two equal parts

¹⁰ be carried along by air or water

¹¹ a piece of news or information

¹² a ray or beam of light

of sunlight slid¹³ between the dark branches of the pine tree turning the sand to gold. The little boy buried his hands in the warm amber¹⁴ dust when suddenly he felt something round and hard. There, between his fingers, was a pebble¹⁵

It was clear like glass and as smooth as if all the rivers in the world had run over it for a million years. It shone like a star when he held it up to the light. Here was his last surprise.

He took his handkerchief out of his pocket and wrapped¹⁶ the lovely crystal¹⁷ pebble in it and put it in his basket. Then he looked up at the evening sky and called out, "Thank you, thank you, clouds and sun, for my third surprise."

It was time to go home. He hurried down through the wood and across the meadow. And the blowing wind, the singing birds and the moving, sun-bright clouds were with him all the way as he went.

"I have my three surprises," he called out to his mother as he opened the door.

"O, what lovely surprises!" said his mother as she took out of the basket the black, red-tipped feather, the two pale blue halves of the thrush's egg and the smooth, hard, crystal pebble.

"Now I have a surprise for you!" And there, at his place on the table, was a large, brown egg ready to be eaten and a bar of cream jelly chocolate. The little boy broke off the top of his egg and put his spoon into the yolk.¹⁸ His mother laughed as he spooned it onto his bread.

"We will keep your surprises here, on my special table," she said and laid them out carefully — the black, red-tipped feather, the two pale blue halves of the thrush's egg, and the smooth, hard, crystal pebble.

¹³ moved quietly

¹⁴ yellowish

¹⁵ a small, round stone worn smooth by water

¹⁶ covered

¹⁷ very clear

¹⁸ the yellow part of an egg

EXERCISES

1. The little boy felt tired of his toys and books
 - (a) because he was physically tired.
 - (b) because he disliked them.
 - (c) because spring had come.
2. What did the little boy's mother ask him to do ?
3. What was his first surprise and how did he get it ?
4. Why did he thank the birds for his second surprise ?
5. Where did he find his third surprise ?
6. What was the reward he got from his mother for collecting the three surprises ?
7. Describe spring in four or five sentences.
8. If you were asked to bring three surprises to your mother what would they be ?
9. Study the following comparisons.
 - (a) The feather, curled like a tiny half-moon, lay in his hand, soft as silk, light as air and warm as spring sunshine.
 - (b) The two pale blue halves of a thrush's broken egg lay like two tiny, empty cups waiting to be filled.
 - (c) The round and hard pebble was clear like glass and shone like a star

Suggested Reading

Literature and the Young Child — Joan E. Cass.

2. A Secret for Two

Montreal is a very large city, but it has some very small streets like Prince Edward Street. No one knew this street as well as did Pierre Dupin. Pierre had delivered milk to the families on the street for thirty years.

During the past fifteen years the horse which drew the milk wagon used by Pierre was a large, white horse named Joseph. When the big, white horse first came to the Milk Company, he didn't have a name. They told Pierre that he could use the white horse. Pierre stroked the softness of the horse's neck and he looked into the eyes of the horse.

"This is a kind horse, a gentle and a faithful one," Pierre said. "I'll name him after Saint Joseph, who was also very kind and gentle."

Within a year Joseph knew the milk route as well as Pierre did. Pierre used to boast that he didn't need reins¹ — he never touched them. Each morning Pierre arrived at the stables of the Milk Company at five o'clock. The wagon would be loaded and Joseph hitched² to it. Pierre would call as he climbed into his seat and Joseph would turn his head, and the other drivers would say that the horse smiled at Pierre. Then Jacques, the foreman³, would say, "All right, Pierre, go on," and Pierre would call softly to Joseph, "Go on, my friend," and this splendid combination would stalk⁴ proudly down the street.

The wagon, without any direction from Pierre, would arrive in Prince Edward Street. The horse would stop at the first house, allow Pierre perhaps thirty seconds to get down from his seat and put a bottle of milk at the front door and would then go on, skipping⁵ two houses and stopping at the third.

¹ stops or ropes for controlling a horse

² fasten ; become fastened, on or to, a hook, or with a rope

³ workman in authority over others

⁴ walk with slow, stiff strides

⁵ to omit ; go from one part to another without paying attention

So down the length of the street the two would go. Then, Joseph would turn around and come back along the other side. Yes, Joseph was a smart horse.

Pierre would boast at the stable of Joseph's skill. "I never touch the reins. He knows just where to stop. Why, a blind man could do my job with Joseph pulling the wagon."

So it went on for years. Pierre and Joseph grew old together, but gradually, not suddenly. Pierre's huge walrus⁶ moustache was pure white now and Joseph didn't lift his knees so high. Jacques, the foreman of the stables, did not notice that they were getting old until Pierre appeared one day carrying a heavy walking stick.

"Hey Pierre," Jacques laughed. "May be you got the gout⁷, hey?"

"But yes, Jacques," Pierre said uncertainly, "one grows old. One's legs get tired".

"You should teach the horse to carry the milk to the front door for you," Jacques told him. "He does everything else".

Pierre knew everyone of the forty families he served on Prince Edward Street. The cooks knew that Pierre could neither read nor write, so they did not follow the usual custom of leaving a note in an empty bottle. If an additional quart of milk was needed, they would sing out when they heard his wagon wheels on the cobbled⁸ street, "Bring an extra quart this morning, Pierre."

Pierre had a remarkable memory. When he arrived at the stable he'd always remember to tell Jacques all the details of the milk distributed without a mistake. Jacques would note these things in a little notebook he always carried.

One morning, the manager of the Milk Company came to inspect the early morning deliveries. Jacques pointed Pierre out to him and said, "Watch how he talks to that horse. See how the horse listens and how he turns his head towards Pierre. See the look in that horse's eyes. You know, I think these two share a secret. It is as though they both chuckle⁹ at us sometimes as they go off on their route. Pierre is a good

⁶ a large sea animal with two long tusks coming downwards

⁷ disease causing painful swelling in the joints

⁸ paved with smooth stone slabs

⁹ low, quiet laugh with closed mouth



man, but he's getting old. Would it be too bold of me to suggest that he be retired and given a small pension?" he asked anxiously.

"But of course," the manager laughed. "He has been on this route now for thirty years and never once has there been a complaint. Tell him it is time he rested. His salary will go on just the same."

But Pierre refused to retire. He was panic-stricken¹⁰ at the thought of not driving Joseph everyday. "We are two old men," he said to Jacques. "Let's wear out together. When Joseph is ready to retire — then I, too, will quit."

Jacques, who was a kind man, understood. There was something about Pierre and Joseph which made a man smile tenderly. It was as though each drew some hidden strength from the other. When Pierre was sitting in his seat, and when Joseph was hitched to the wagon, neither seemed old. But when they finished their work, then Pierre would

¹⁰ possessed with fear

limp¹¹ down the street slowly, seeming very old indeed. Then, the horse's head would drop and he would walk very wearily to his stall.

Then one morning, Jacques had dreadful news for Pierre. He said, "Pierre, Joseph did not wake this morning. He was very old, Pierre, he was twenty-five, and that is like seventy-five for a man."

"Yes," Pierre said slowly. "Yes, I am seventy-five. And I cannot see Joseph again."

"Of course you can," Jacques sympathised. "He is there in his stall, looking very peaceful. Go over and see him."

Pierre took one step forward then turned. "No...you don't understand, Jacques."

Jacques patted him on the shoulder. "We'll find another horse just as good as Joseph. Why, in a month's time you'll teach him to know your route as well as Joseph did. We'll"

The look in Pierre's eyes stopped him. For years Pierre had worn a heavy cap, the peak of which came low over his eyes. Now Jacques looked into Pierre's eyes and he saw something which startled¹² him. He saw a dead, lifeless look in them. The eyes were mirroring the grief that was in Pierre's heart and in his soul. It was as though his heart and soul had died.

"Take today off, Pierre," Jacques said, but already Pierre was hobbling¹³ off down the street. Had anyone been near he would have seen tears streaming down his cheeks and would have heard half-smothered¹⁴ sobs. Pierre walked to the corner and stepped into the street. There was a warning yell from the driver of a huge truck that was coming fast and there was the scream¹⁵ of brakes, but Pierre apparently heard neither.

Five minutes later an ambulance driver said, "He's dead. Was killed instantly."

Jacques and several of the milk-wagon drivers had arrived, and they looked down at the still figure.

"I couldn't help it," the driver of the truck protested, "he walked

¹¹ walk lamely or unevenly as if a leg were hurt or stiff

¹² surprised and shocked

¹³ stumbling; walking as if lame

¹⁴ suffocated; suppressed

¹⁵ a loud, sharp cry of fear or pain; a loud, piercing sound

right into my truck. He never saw it, I guess. Why, he walked into it as though he were blind."

The ambulance doctor bent down. "Blind? Of course, the man was blind. See those cataracts¹⁶? This man has been blind for five years." He turned to Jacques. "You say he worked for you? Didn't you know he was blind?"

"No.....no....." Jacques said softly. "None of us knew. Only one knew — a friend of his named Joseph... It was a secret, I think, just between those two."

— *Quentin Reynolds*

EXERCISES

A

Answer the following questions in single sentences.

1. Who was Pierre Dupin and where did he live?
2. In which country is Montreal located?
3. Why was the white horse named Joseph and by whom?
4. How many families lived in Prince Edward Street?
5. Was Pierre Dupin an educated man? Give a reason in support of your answer.
6. What do you think of the manager of the Milk Company? Was he kind or mean?
7. Why was Pierre afraid of retiring from his job?
8. What secret was shared between the man and the horse?

B

1. What was the basis of love and respect between Pierre Dupin and Joseph?
2. Name a horse from Indian history and the quality for which it became famous.
3. Rewrite in your own words any story of an animal's devotion to a human being (not more than 25% words).

Suggested Reading

Kashan's — Anton Chekhov

¹⁶ growth over the eye-balls that gradually obscures sight

3. "You Can't Kill the Spirit"

Willi Unsoeld was professor of philosophy at the Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. Apart from philosophy he also taught mountaineering to eager students in his outdoor recreation classes. He himself was a famed mountaineer. He had been the co-leader of the first team that climbed Mt Everest's West Ridge in 1963 ; he was also the first to climb Kashmir's Masherbrum, in 1960, and Pakistan's Toshain II, in 1974.

Willi was now 52. He suffered continuous pains due to arthritis.¹ He walked on artificial hip joints. He had also lost nine toes to frostbite² on the Mt Everest expedition. But Willi still loved climbing mountains. His experience was that in mountain-climbing decision-making, group cooperation and leadership were more important than mere physical fitness.

On 4 March 1979, Willi and twenty of his students were trying to climb the 4,392 metres high summit³ of Mt Rainier. They were only 430 metres away from the summit when they were caught in a storm. They camped for the night at 3,600 metres and started the next morning for their base camp at Murr which was 550 metres below. They knew that it was important to get out of the storm. The longer they remained in the storm, the more exhausted they would be and last of all, hypothermia⁴ would set in. Therefore, they decided to go down through the Cadaver Gap which was steep and dangerous. Their tents had also been damaged the previous night and it was unthinkable to spend another night in the storm without proper shelter.

Willi led the way down. He was roped to three other climbers following him. Suddenly the snow mass they were walking on broke loose

¹ inflammation of joints

² injury caused by exposure to cold

³ top

⁴ lowering of body temperature

and rolled down the mountain. Willi, Janie Diepenbrock, Frank Kaplan and Peter Miller started falling down in a flying blanket of snow and ice. They were in the midst of the thing Willi feared most: an avalanche.⁵

Kaplan felt weightless, like a feather wafted in the air. Willi had told him that the avalanche snow, while in the air, is soft and cotton-like, but the moment it hits the ground it hardens into concrete. Kaplan, therefore, tried to swim to the surface of the waves of snow that had enveloped him. In his fear, Willi's words gave him strength: "You can learn by being afraid. By meeting a challenge and not giving up. You work through your fears. This builds a confidence that will stick with you throughout your life."

Almost 150 metres down Kaplan felt the avalanche slowing down. He made a last effort, and with a prayer, broke through the surface as the snow tightened around him. Almost immediately he saw Peter Miller's hand sticking out of snow. Working hastily he dug his friend out of the grave of ice. Willi and Janie Diepenbrock were not so lucky. They were found buried under a metre of ice and snow. Both were dead.

The rest of the students were not touched by the avalanche. One by one the remaining rope teams came down the slope to the scene of death. For more than an hour, Ian Yolles and Bruce Clifton tried to breathe life back into Willi and Janie. But it was hopeless.

Everyone stood silent. They could not believe Willi was dead. He had always encouraged his students. They remembered his words and his songs. Now he was gone leaving his students in a storm. Their condition was getting worse by the minute. Several of the climbers were beginning to suffer from hypothermia. It wasn't possible to see far. All around them was a wall of snow. Night was only a few hours away. If they did not reach Camp Muir before dark many of them would die at night in the cold.

They elected Jan Yolles as the leader of the team. He asked Bruce Ostermann and Jeff Casebolt to lead the way down. This would allow Ian Yolles to look after Peter Miller who wasn't feeling very well. They decided that they would climb down in teams of four. Casebolt would lead the first team and Ostermann the second. Three other teams

⁵ a mass of loosened snow suddenly sliding down a mountain

would bring up the rear. "Look out for each other," Yolles advised.

At 3 p m., Casebolt started across the slope of Cowlitz glacier. All around there was the whiteness of snow and he felt the ground before taking the next step. He hoped he was going in the right direction. Willi used to say : "Having chosen your course, be confident and stick to your course. There comes a time when only faith can help you."

Leading the third team, David Ridley tried to keep the second team in view but within ten minutes the second team disappeared in a blanket of snow. The wind was so strong that it forced Ridley to his knees often. Sometimes he turned his sides to it. Behind Ridley, Yolles kept close to Miller who was walking unsteadily. Suddenly the wind threw Miller off his feet. Yolles helped him to stand up. "Come on, Peter !" Yolles shouted above the wind. "We've got to keep moving. It's our only hope."

Willi would say : "Take care of each other. Share your energies with the group. No one must feel alone or cut off, for that is when you don't make it."

Yolles heard a shout up ahead : "Someone relieve me." It was Ridley. He was badly tired and he wanted someone else to take his place. Yolles pushed forward and took his place.

At 4 p m., they came over a rise and saw the other teams waiting. "We've got to slow down and stay closer !" Yolles shouted. He saw that Sheri Gerson and Marjorie Butler were in no condition to walk any further. He put an arm round each woman. "We'll make it," he told them. "But we have to keep going."

Visibility⁶ was down to 4.5 metres now and each step was laboured and mechanical. Crunch ... crunch ... crunch ... Suddenly, Casebolt fell into a ditch. It was one metre deep and 45 metres straight across. It was created by the recent avalanche. Casebolt walked carefully on all fours and finally reached the snow on the other side. Penna Dempsey followed close behind. But Wanda Shreoder began sliding down the hill. "Hang on," Penna called, "I will pull you." Digging her axe into ice for support, Penna pulled Wanda across the icy trench a metre or so at a time.

Seven or eight centimetres of ice and snow had built on Bruce Oster-

⁶ the relative possibility of being seen

mann's hood by the time he relieved Casebolt in the lead. Ice-drifts were blowing chest-high in some places, and darkness was only an hour away. If they did not find Muir soon, Ostermann knew some of them would not live the night out. He thought of digging a snow cave. It would give warmth. But it was impossible to make a snow cave in the high winds and the freezing temperature.

Ostermann chose to push on. He made his decision quickly. He knew that if Willi had been alive he would have taken the same decision.

At 4.30 p.m. visibility was less than three metres and darkness was already beginning to close in.⁷ Ostermann consulted Yolles and Casebolt. "Do you think we are going in the right direction? Should we go higher on the ridge?"

The three men took twenty steps higher up the ridge to see if they were on the correct path. The ground looked the same. The group could be wandering—lost. How much longer would they live? Ostermann wondered.

Suddenly the wind changed, showing some rocks in front of them. But there were no rocks on the glacier. They must be lost. Then Casebolt spotted something sticking out of the snow up ahead, it looked like a pipe, but turned out to be an ice-covered line tied to a rock. Had it been used as a clothes line⁸? Had they reached Muir after all?

They ran back and forth in the deep snow, looking in all directions until they bumped into the rocks that formed the main stone hut for Muir. All over, the square building was covered with snow. The wind had blown the snow away from the small door. "My God!" Ostermann shouted. "We're here! We made it! We're alive!"

For two more days the storm continued. But the group was safe. No one had been seriously injured, but they felt the absence of Willi and Janie. After the storm had cleared, a rescue party reached Muir. Casebolt and Ostermann brought the dead bodies of Willie and Janie. As the students entered Mt Rainier's Paradise Visiting Centre they sang a few lines from Willi's favourite climbing song:

"You can't kill the spirit
It's like the mountain

⁷ creep in

⁸ a rope or wire on which clothes are hung

It's old and strong
It goes on and on."

— *Terry and Harriet King*

EXERCISES

1. What qualities, apart from physical fitness, are required in mountain-climbing ?
2. Write out those lines from the lesson which tell you that Willi Unsoeld was not physically fit.
3. What would you do if you were caught in an avalanche ?
4. Who was elected leader after the death of Willi Unsoeld ?
5. Give examples from the lesson which show that cooperation, encouragement and group-work helped the team to reach the base camp.

Suggested Reading

Four Short Stories — Jack London

4. The Dragon¹ Who Grew

Ah Ming was a dragon.

A very large, green and black dragon. When he breathed he puffed out a lot of smoke as if he had a great fire inside him. His eyes shone like rubies and his tail seemed to stretch for miles and miles.

He had not always been so large and imposing, for when he was only a few years old he was very small and thin, with no tail at all. In fact, his mother, who was beautiful, was quite ashamed of him.

"I do wish Ah Ming would grow a little," she said to the other dragons. "No one will ever be frightened of him, he will never be able to fight battles or look impressive in a procession."

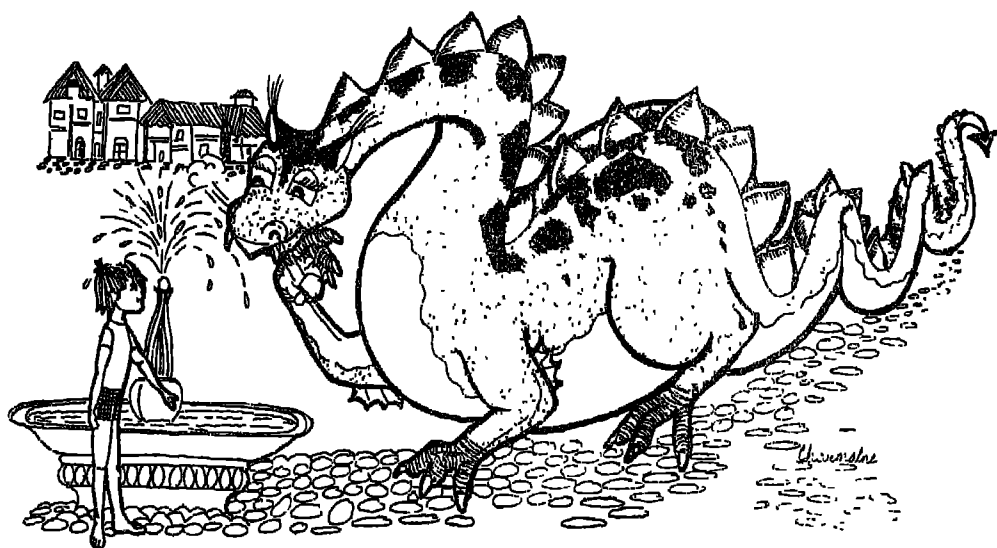
This made Ah Ming very unhappy. He used to hide among the rocks and trees where no one could see him, and tears would roll down his dragon cheeks. He decided he would run away.

"No one is really kind to me," he said. "I'll find a new home where I can live happily all by myself and I'll be a kind, gentle dragon, even if I cannot be a large, beautiful and fierce one."

So one dark night, when a half moon gave just enough light for Ah Ming to see the road he would take, and which led over the hills and far away, he left home. He felt a little sad and lonely leaving all the other dragons he knew so well, but he was quite determined to make his own way in the world. He was so small that he was able to take the little paths and tracks between the hills and across the rice fields, which would have been much too narrow for most dragons. By morning he had gone a long way. He slept under a banyan tree and waited until it was dark before moving on again. He travelled like this for several days and soon he was a long, long way from his old home.

One morning he came to a place where tall trees grew on the top of a little hill. There was a huge, rocky cave out of which a stream bubbled. Down below in the valley he could see a village with lots of houses. It

¹ mythical monster like snake with wings and claws



was a lovely, quiet place.

"I shall stay here for ever and ever and ever," said Ah Ming happily. So he settled down in the cave and made up his mind to be kind and good.

He ate green grass and wild fruits and the blossoms that fell from the trees and the little mushrooms² that sprang up on the hillside. Sometimes he found honey that the bees had left in a hollow tree, and he drank the cool bubbling water from the little stream.

Weeks went by and Ah Ming felt very peaceful ; no one came to disturb him and from the grassy mound³ outside his cave he had a wonderful view of the village below him in the valley. He watched the children playing ; he heard the sound of music and bells. He saw the street stalls and everyone going shopping and he watched the carts, wagons and rickshaws moving along the road. During festivals and holidays, banners, paper lanterns, and flags filled the narrow streets with colour.

One bright, sunny morning, Ah Ming decided he would go down to the village and make friends with everyone, for he felt sure they would like him. "I am such a tiny dragon," he said to himself. "Even the

² a plant that grows very quickly and can be eaten

³ small hill

children will want to play with me."

So, when the sun was high in the sky and the street was full of noisy activities, Ah Ming suddenly appeared. He expected everyone to come running to meet him, to stroke⁴ his head, to admire his colours and to ask his name. Instead, there was the most terrible confusion. People dropped everything and ran; doors were slammed⁵ and bolted, windows closed and mothers hid their children. In a moment the street was empty.

"Oh dear, oh dear, whatever is the matter?" said Ah Ming. "Surely they can't be frightened of me?"

He walked very slowly and carefully down the village street until he came to the village fountain with its lovely, clear pool of water. Sitting on the low wall around the pool was a small boy. Ah Ming stopped at once, and he and the boy looked at each other.

"Why has everybody but you run away?" asked Ah Ming. "I'm not going to hurt anyone after all; I'm just a very tiny little dragon."

"Really!" said the little boy in surprise. "I'm afraid everyone was very, very frightened of you. They thought you were going to eat them up. I nearly ran away myself but my grandfather had been telling me such wonderful old stories about dragons, I thought I would stay and see what you really looked like. How very, very large, you are!"

"Large!" said Ah Ming in astonishment. "Me?" He shook his head. "Why, I'm perhaps the smallest dragon in the world — that's why I had to leave home."

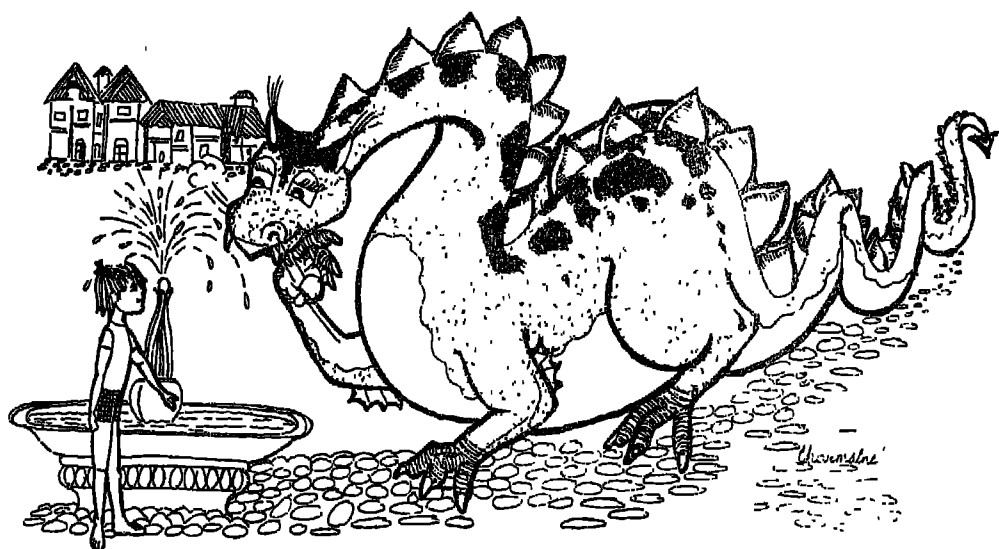
"You've made a big mistake," said the small boy. "Just take a look at yourself." Ah Ming turned and looked down into the bright, clear water of the pool and suddenly saw that he was simply enormous. He was puffing out clouds of smoke into the still air, his tail stretched out behind him, his neck curved high, his eyes glittered⁶ like jewels. "Oh, dear, oh dear!" said Ah Ming. "What has happened to me?"

"You've grown," said the small boy, "that's all, but you look simply beautiful, a real dragon. If you honestly don't eat up people I'll hurry off and tell them all that you are quite harmless and then they will come

⁴ to pass one's hand lovingly, pat

⁵ shut violently and noisily

⁶ shone brightly



was a lovely, quiet place.

"I shall stay here for ever and ever and ever," said Ah Ming happily. So he settled down in the cave and made up his mind to be kind and good.

He ate green grass and wild fruits and the blossoms that fell from the trees and the little mushrooms² that sprang up on the hillside. Sometimes he found honey that the bees had left in a hollow tree, and he drank the cool bubbling water from the little stream.

Weeks went by and Ah Ming felt very peaceful ; no one came to disturb him and from the grassy mound³ outside his cave he had a wonderful view of the village below him in the valley. He watched the children playing ; he heard the sound of music and bells. He saw the street stalls and everyone going shopping and he watched the carts, wagons and rick-shaws moving along the road. During festivals and holidays, banners, paper lanterns, and flags filled the narrow streets with colour.

One bright, sunny morning, Ah Ming decided he would go down to the village and make friends with everyone, for he felt sure they would like him. "I am such a tiny dragon," he said to himself. "Even the

² a plant that grows very quickly and can be eaten

³ small hill

children will want to play with me."

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⁴ to pass one's hand lovingly, pat

⁵ shut violently and noisily

⁶ shone brightly

out of their houses and look at you.”

In a short time Ah Ming was surrounded by an admiring crowd. Children climbed on his back, little boys sat on his tail, babies were held up to stroke his cheeks. He felt very happy — everybody really liked him.

After a lot of talk and discussion, the village council⁷ decided to adopt Ah Ming as their special dragon. So nearly every day he came down from his cave and stretched out on the village street. He took up a great deal of room but he was very careful not to knock down any of the stalls and the children were able to play the most exciting games — jumping over his back and sliding⁸ down his tail.

His fame soon spread abroad and people came from far and wide to see him.

Ah Ming was very happy. At festivals and holidays he always led the processions ; he was gentle and good tempered with the children and polite to everyone. Luckily, he stopped growing, though he got rather fat. He is living there to this day, a contented and well-satisfied dragon.

EXERCISES

1. Why was Ah Ming's mother ashamed of him ?
2. What sort of place did he choose as his new home and what were the advantages of that place ?
3. What was the villagers' reaction on seeing Ah Ming ?
4. How did Ah Ming discover that he had grown ?
5. What difference do you find between Ah Ming when he was small and when he had grown ?
6. Ah Ming was a considerate dragon. Do you agree ? Give reasons in support of your answer.
7. A fable is an imaginary story in which animals usually talk. This is a fable. Give two examples to prove that it is one. Mention three other fables that you have read.
8. The setting of the Ah Ming story is :
a) India b) China c) Greece.
Choose the correct answer.

⁷ group of persons elected or chosen to give advice, make rules and manage affairs

⁸ slipping along

9. "... and his tail seemed to stretch for miles and miles."

Collect such expressions from the lesson in which repetition has been used as a device to strengthen the meaning and to achieve musical effect.

10. Consult the dictionary and describe the following creatures :

Mermaid, Phoenix, Unicorn, Centaur, Cerberus, Griffin and Fairies.

Suggested Reading

1. *Literature and the Young Child* — Joan E. Cass

2. *Aesop's Fables*

5. The Two Corporals

CHARACTERS¹

HITLER

ADJUTANT

NAPOLEON

MEMBER OF HITLER YOUTH (aged twelve)

FOUR BOYS AND TWO GIRLS (from the countries which Hitler had won)

[This is a play about Napoleon and Hitler. Both of them were ordinary army men : Corporals. From such a lowly position Napoleon rose to become the emperor of France and Hitler became the Chancellor of Germany. Both of them dreamt of conquering the world and both of them were ultimately defeated when England, Russia and other countries combined against them. This similarity in the characters of Napoleon and Hitler is only skin-deep; they were actually poles apart. While Napoleon became the emperor of France by saving the country in its hour of peril, Hitler usurped the high post of Chancellor of Germany through deceit and black-mail. Napoleon was a humanitarian, Hitler a tyrant. Napoleon led France to glory, Hitler took Germany to death and destruction. Further, Napoleon died long before Hitler was born. They were actually born in different ages: one in the eighteenth century and the other in the twentieth century. The author brings them together in an imaginary situation to point out how shallow, ignorant, vain and bestial Hitler appears in comparison with Napoleon. This play brings out the above-mentioned differences in the characters of Napoleon and Hitler and highlights Hitler's little education.]

The curtain rises on Napoleon's tomb at the Invalides. It is the evening of a day in the first week of June 1940. Adolph Hitler, in brown shirt, peaked cap, riding boots and a dirty raincoat enters from left. Behind him is his adjutant.]

HITLER : So this is the tomb ?

ADJUTANT : Yes, my Fuhrer¹.

¹ a German name for a leaver

HITLER : It is...(pauses). It is very big.

ADJUTANT : Exactly so, my Fuhrer.

HITLER : A great man — that Italian Bonaparte. Perhaps the greatest of captains, of lawgivers, of conquerors.²

ADJUTANT : Before you, my Fuhrer.

HITLER : He too dreamed of a United Europe—of a New Order.

ADJUTANT : But he failed, my Fuhrer.

HITLER : As I shall not fail ! Bonaparte failed because of the English and the Russians. I shall avenge³ him !

ADJUTANT : But of course, my Fuhrer.

HITLER : Leave me. Return in half an hour.

ADJUTANT : Leave you, alone, my Fuhrer ? Is that wise ?

HITLER : It is my order. Leave me !

[The adjutant salutes, and goes away. There is a small silence. Hitler stands facing the tomb. Suddenly the figure of Napoleon appears before the tomb. He has in his hand his famous three-cornered hat.]

HITLER : Napoleon Bonaparte, I salute you !

NAPOLEON : Who speaks ?

HITLER : Adolf Hitler.

NAPOLEON (coldly) : House-painter and Corporal in the German Army, I believe ?

HITLER (with dignity) : Chancellor⁴ of the Third Great German Reich⁵ — victor of Europe.

NAPOLEON : I was a corporal too.

HITLER : I prefer to salute the Emperor, the Conqueror !

NAPOLEON : My soldiers liked to die for the little Corporal.

HITLER : My soldiers have no choice.

NAPOLEON : Their time will come. It always does. You have conquered Europe, you say ?

HITLER : Your Paris is under my feet.

NAPOLEON : I remember that I took Berlin.

HITLER : I conquered Poland in three weeks !

² one who defeats or overcomes the other

³ take revenge for

⁴ the title for the German Prime Minister

⁵ German Kingdom

- NAPOLEON : The Poles shed their blood for, not against, me.
HITLER : Italy is my friend.
NAPOLEON : My stepson was Viceroy of Italy.
HITLER : Norway, the Low Countries,⁶ all Europe from the Pyrenees⁷ to the Vistula⁸ — mine !
NAPOLEON : And Spain. Spain destroyed me.
HITLER : I knew better. I began with Spain.
NAPOLEON : And England ?
HITLER : A matter of weeks.
NAPOLEON : Wherever there was water to float a ship, I found the English in my way.
HITLER : You were unfortunate. You had no aeroplanes to bomb London with.
NAPOLEON : If I could have only controlled the Channel for thirty-six hours, to land a hundred thousand men in Kent or Sussex...
HITLER : No landing is necessary. My Air Force will do the trick.
NAPOLEON : What about Russia ?
HITLER : I made an agreement with Russia.
NAPOLEON : I also made an agreement with Russia — at Tilsit.
HITLER : Now I am ready to fight with Russia if it is necessary.
NAPOLEON : As I was ready to fight with Russia.
HITLER : If I cannot conquer England I will march to Moscow.
NAPOLEON : Moscow !
HITLER : Then I shall unite all Europe against the English.
NAPOLEON : That was possibly my idea.
HITLER : There was nothing wrong with the idea !
NAPOLEON : Nothing, except that it was not practical.
HITLER : You had no railways to transport your troops, no tanks. You had no good staff.
NAPOLEON : I had the Cavalry. I had Generals like Murat, Berthier, Davoust and Ney. Can you match my Generals ?
HITLER : My German generals are better than yours.
NAPOLEON : The German Army I defeated at Jena was called the best in

⁶ Denmark, Norway, Sweden

⁷ a range of mountains between France and Spain

⁸ the name of a river to the west of Germany

Europe.

HITLER : I shall be in Moscow in six weeks.

NAPOLEON : I entered Moscow.

HITLER : You did not destroy the Russian armies.

NAPOLEON : I won the battle of Borodino.

HITLER : Hardly a victory. You did not throw in your reserve. You had lost your nerve.

NAPOLEON : I was two thousand miles from Paris. I would have been mad to use my last reserve.

HITLER : I shall throw in every man !

NAPOLEON : I had also done so but the Russian winter destroyed me.

HITLER : Winter does not destroy an army nowadays.

NAPOLEON : You are very confident. I once believed in my stars.

HITLER : But not in mankind.

NAPOLEON (*angrily*) : I think mankind is brutish⁹ and stupid. Yet mankind was too much for me, for all my genius.¹⁰

HITLER : But not for me ! I make men in my own image or I destroy them.

NAPOLEON : I did not want an empire of slaves. I wanted to increase the prosperity and happiness of all men. But the men did not want it.

HITLER : My Germans know better.

NAPOLEON : Why do you come here ?

HITLER : Perhaps to return your visit to Berlin.

NAPOLEON : What have you to do with me ?

HITLER : Your life was my model.

NAPOLEON : I had heard your education was defective. Now I am sure of it.

HITLER : I am proud of my humble origin.

NAPOLEON : To be proud of what you cannot help — whether it be high or low — is not sensible. I knew what poverty was like. It was nothing to be proud of.

HITLER : It is the fire which forges character.

NAPOLEON : Humbug ! Most men are poor and unsuccessful. Therefore, they pretend that failure is a virtue and money the root of all evil. Yet they run after money and success all their life.

⁹ cruel like an animal

¹⁰ very great capacity of mind

HITLER : I live only for Germany.

NAPOLEON : You do not live at all. You haven't got a family.

HITLER : All the children of Europe are my family.

[Six children appear on the stage around the tomb — two girls and four boys. A little away from these children is a spectacled boy of twelve in the uniform of the boy-army of Hitler.]

FIRST BOY : I sold newspapers in Warsaw. Your bombers killed me.

FIRST GIRL : I played in Rotterdam. Your bombers killed me.

SECOND BOY : I lived in Belgrade. Yours bombers blinded me.

THIRD BOY : I worked in a factory in Odessa. Your soldiers tortured me.

SECOND GIRL : I lived in Athens. I starved¹¹ to death.

FOURTH BOY : I was a messenger-boy in London. Your bombers killed me. *(There is a small silence.)*

NAPOLEON : What have you to say, Adolf Hitler ?

HITLER : Accidents will happen in times of war. You cannot make omelettes without breaking eggs. Let my Hitler Youth speak for me !

NAPOLEON : Speak up, young man.

HITLER YOUTH : I speak for my Fuhrer, who has made me what I am, who has taught me my duty to him and to Great Germany.

NAPOLEON : What is that duty ?

HITLER YOUTH : Shall I answer, my Fuhrer ?

HITLER : Answer.

HITLER YOUTH *(with satisfaction)* : I sold my parents to the Secret Police for speaking against the Fuhrer. They died in Dachau.

(The children leave the stage.)

NAPOLEON : Your children have spoken, Adolf Hitler.

HITLER : You speak as though you hate me. You were also hated in your time. English children were threatened¹² with the name of 'Boney' when they were naughty.

NAPOLEON : I was perhaps the bad man of a fairy-tale. You are the villain of a nightmare¹³. A nightmare that has come true.

My dream has come true. I have made it come true. I was homeless, jobless, friendless ; I sold postcards in the streets of Vienna.

¹¹ to suffer or die from hunger

¹² to make a statement with intention to punish or harm

¹³ a frightening dream

I was insulted by the Jews. Yet I always knew that I was born to lead Germany out of defeat and shame. I have made Germans the master race of Europe.

NAPOLEON : One English naval officer destroyed my dream. And England, you say, fights on.

HITLER : Because the English do not know that they are beaten.

NAPOLEON : The English never know when they are beaten.

HITLER : England can wait until I have finished with Russia.

NAPOLEON : You will never finish with Russia. I, too, thought that the road to London lay through Moscow, and my journey's end was the ice of the Beresina¹⁴. Take my warning, Adolf Hitler. Learn from my failures and not from my success. So long as I fought for freedom my soldiers fought with me. Free men and the hope of freedom wished me well. My attack on Russia failed because I was then an invader; elsewhere I succeeded because I was then a liberator. Man's love of freedom had made me great. Man's love of freedom threw me down. The small English channel and the vast spaces of Russia will destroy you. Be warned by me.

HITLER : What would you like me to do ?

NAPOLEON : To be saved, don't attack Russia. Seek¹⁵ peace. Give food to the Europe you have starved. Free the countries you have conquered.

HITLER : This from a world-conqueror ?

NAPOLEON : I was imprisoned¹⁶ for six years, I had a long time to think. I learnt my lesson.

HITLER : Your lesson ?

NAPOLEON : That no man is so big that he cannot become too big for his boots.

HITLER : And then ?

NAPOLEON : And then he becomes a burden both to God and man. He destroys himself. I have warned you, Adolf Hitler.

HITLER : I do not believe in God. I care nothing for men. The Church I have insulted. Men I can master and destroy. You failed Bonaparte, because you were at heart a middle-class man. You wanted a family.

¹⁴ a place in Russia where Napoleon was defeated by Russians

¹⁵ look for

¹⁶ put or keep in prison

You did not destroy Germany after Jena, as I have destroyed the countries. You believed in your generals till the end. I shoot my generals when they are of no use to me. You are jealous, Napoleon, because you know that where you failed I shall succeed. That is why you warn Adolf Hitler against marching into Moscow.

(While Hitler speaks Napoleon slowly disappears from the stage. The adjutant re-enters and salutes.)

ADJUTANT : You called, my Fuhrer ?

HITLER : No...yes...I have stayed here too long.

ADJUTANT : Yes, my Fuhrer.

HITLER : After all, I do not find that Napoleon was such a great man.

ADJUTANT : No, my Fuhrer.

HITLER : I have not found at this tomb the atmosphere, the inspiration that I had expected. It is cold, too.

ADJUTANT : Yes, my Fuhrer.

HITLER : I have made up my mind. You will take my order to the General Staff. In forty-eight hours the attack upon Russia will go forward.

ADJUTANT : Yes, my Fuhrer.

HITLER *(turning back to the tomb)* : He shall see that I will succeed where he failed. I shall come here just once more.

ADJUTANT : When will that be, my Fuhrer ?

HITLER : When I have torn the red flag from the tower of Kremlin. I shall fling it there.

(He flings out his right hand towards the tomb, turns and goes out. Napoleon once again appears on the stage.)

NAPOLEON *(slowly)* : An unpleasant, common little man. I am glad that I shall not see him again.

Curtain

—Val Gielgud

EXERCISES

A

1. Give examples of common little men.
2. What are the main points of difference between Napoleon and Hitler ? Who, according to you, is the better human being

3. How were the two great men of history — Napoleon and Hitler — destroyed by Russia ?
4. Name the English Naval officer who destroyed Napoleon's dream.

B

1. Explain the difference between "the bad man of a fairy-tale" and "the villain of a nightmare". Name the persons for whom the above phrases have been used.

Suggested Reading

Seven One-Act Plays — edited by C. Mahajan (OUP 1963)

6. The Brave Hunter

[Okeke is a Nigerian boy whose father was killed by a wild boar which the local people call Ezi-ohia. Okeke is determined to kill the boar. One day, while he is looking for the boar, he crosses his tribe's boundary. A boy stops him and demands to know why he is there. Okeke explains, and the other boy agrees to help him look for the boar. Together the two boys go to the river following the tracks of a herd led by a boar of great size. They reach the edge of the forest and look down at the herd rolling about in the river.]

"That's Ezi-ohia," Okeke said, "I would know him anywhere. See, one of his ears is broken. It happened when he was battling with my father."

"When you finish killing him you must return to your own lands," Okacha said.

Okeke nodded. "But I cannot shoot him in the water." Okeke stretched himself full length at the foot of a tree.

"Soon the sun will sink behind the hill. Then he will lead his herd out of the river to graze." He cupped his chin in his hands and fixed his eyes on Ezi-ohia's great head and ears which seemed to float by themselves on the surface of the water.

Overhead, some birds made the forest clearing ring with their song. Okeke listened to the birds. He, too, would sing again when Ezi-ohia's ears hung in the smoke that twisted under the roof of his cave.

As the sun slid down the sky towards the west and the great heat lessened, the jungle began to come slowly to life.

Ezi-ohia lifted his huge body out of the river, the water dripping from his ears. Snake-like, Okeke slid along on his stomach until he was out of the shelter of the trees and into the dry grass at the edge of the clearing. Okacha followed him amazed¹, for he had never seen such a good hunter among his own people.

¹filled with great surprise or wonder



The boars were out of the water and struggling up the river bed, led by Ezi-ohia, the huge boar with the great ears. Okeke rolled onto his back and drew his knees up to his stomach. Gripping² his bow with his feet he slipped an arrow into the bow string. "Ah!" Okacha breathed in amazement. The great hunters who had used this ancient method had long since died, and the younger men had never mastered it.

"You will never kill him that way, Okeke," Okacha said. "It's far too difficult. No one can do it any longer."

A smile lit up Okeke's face. "I can," he said. "My father, who was a great hunter, taught me. If he had fired his arrow this way when Ezi-ohia attacked him he would be alive today."

He twisted around on his arched³ back and aimed his bow at the huge leader of the herd.

² taking and keeping a firm hold of

³ curved like an arch

"Hu !" he shouted suddenly. "Hu ! Ezi-ohia !" The boar spun round and threw up its head. "Hu !" Okeke shouted again, "Hu ! Ezi-ohia."

The boar tore fiercely at the ground with its long tusks ; then Okeke pulled the bow-string back until his hands were against his chin and aimed the arrow.

Okacha was ready to fly for dear life, but Okeke's arms and legs were taut⁴ and steady, and his feet gripped the five-foot bow as firmly as his hands would have done. Ezi-ohia thundered towards the boy, his great hooves⁵ beating on the hard ground. Okacha's legs began to tremble like a deer's when warned of danger. "I must not show fear in front of a boy younger than myself," he thought nervously.⁶

Okacha's eyes widened in terror as the huge boar swept closer. There was a sudden noise as Okeke released the bow-string and the arrow sped towards its target.⁷ With this ancient method of shooting more power was given to the bow and the arrow flew at almost double the speed it would have done using the normal method. The muscles in Okacha's legs moved like springs and he ran into the jungle.

Okacha lay in the jungle listening fearfully. Would the big boar come looking for him after it had killed Okeke ? He began to creep deeper into the undergrowth.⁸ He had only gone a few yards when a long drawn out "Huu" came through the forest. He jumped up. It was Okeke's voice.

Like someone in a dream, the older boy ran back to the edge of the clearing. Okeke was still lying on his back and in front of him, its broad nose almost touching the boy's feet, lay the great boar, legs folded under it, motionless.

Using Okacha's axe, Okeke cut off the boar's head and put it into a nearby ant hill. It was an old trick of his people; within an hour the boar's head had been picked clean. He carried the skull down to the river and washed it, scrubbing⁹ it with sand.

tightly stretched

horny parts of the foot of a horse and some other animals
worriedly

person, thing or animal aimed at

shrubs, bushes, etc., growing under tall trees

leaning by rubbing hard

When he had finished, he rested the huge ears across his shoulders and turned his face towards the hill. Ezi-ohia's big ears would hang in the smoke twisting under the roof of the cave, and there would be singing and dancing round the fire.

EXERCISES

Answer each of the following questions in single sentences.

1. Why was Okeke determined to kill the boar ?
2. How did Okeke recognise Ezi-ohia, the boar ?
3. Was Okeke nervous while waiting for the boar ? If not, why wasn't he so ?
4. What did Okacha think of the way Okeke used his bow ?
5. How did Okeke attract the attention of the boar towards himself ?
6. What did the two boys do when the boar charged ?
7. Of the two boys — Okeke and Okacha — who do you think was more courageous ? Give a reason for your answer.
8. Why did Okeke take the ears of Ezi-ohia back to his cave ?

7. The Poles

On the northern and southern extremes of the earth are the poles : the North pole and the South pole. The North pole is called the Arctic and the South pole is known as the Antarctic. The Arctic is a hollow at the top of the globe and the Antarctic a corresponding¹ bulge² at the bottom. It is as if an immense dent³, caused by the pressure of some cosmic⁴ thumb, has been made at the North pole, its effect passing through the earth to come out as a swelling at the South pole. The dent on the top of the world is the Arctic Ocean, the world's smallest ocean ; the bulge at the bottom is the continent of Antarctica.

The Arctic and the Antarctic are truly contrasted. The Arctic ocean is 5,541,000 square miles in area, the Antarctic continent is 5,100,000 square miles. The average depth of the Arctic Ocean, 4,200 feet, is equalled by the Antarctic's mean elevation of 6,000 feet, which makes it the highest of all the continents. Even the maximum depth of the Arctic Ocean, 17,500 feet, has its exact opposite in the Antarctic's highest mountain which is 19,000 feet above sea-level. They are so similar in shape that one can be super-imposed⁵ on the other.

The Arctic and Antarctic, then, are the proverbial opposites — 'poles apart,' as we say. But before looking at their differences let us note what they have in common. Both have a net loss of heat from the sun. In both the regions light plays amazing tricks. Here you can see the noon darkness and the mid-night sun. This happens because of the inclination of the earth on its axis. In the polar skies you can also see mock suns (or parhelia) and double and triple mock moons. Mock suns and mock moons are created by millions of prismatic ice crystals in the sky. Above all,

¹ in the same way

² a swelling

³ a small hollow made by pressure

⁴ universal

⁵ to lay one thing on another

the polar skies are the only stage for the show of light by the northern and southern lights known as aurora borealis⁶ and aurora australis.⁷

Polar auroras appear in the form of bright, coloured arcs, bands, patches and, most often, as waving curtains. An aurora is caused by charged particles from the sun striking the rarified gases of the ionosphere⁸ and lighting them. In other words, the lights are made by electrical storms 50 to 600 miles up, in much the same way that neon light is made in a tube. There is no sound accompanying this high lightning.

The Antarctic has much more ice than the Arctic—eight times more. This is because the Antarctic is a continent. It has very little heat-storing capacity. The Arctic is primarily an ocean. It has a capacity to store summer heat which it uses later on to moderate the cold of winter. The whole of the Antarctic is covered by an ice sheet with an average thickness of more than a mile. The Arctic does not have that much of ice. Only Greenland and the high Arctic are covered with ice today.

This ice on the poles outflows in the form of glaciers towards the sea. All ice tends to flow and find its level in the same way as water does. This outward flow of ice to the sea forms barrier-ice in the Antarctic. Ice forms itself into big blocks, often 150 ft high, presenting a face of sheer ice-cliffs. In the Arctic when the temperature goes below 28° Fahrenheit, sea ice begins to form. Miles upon miles of sea is covered with a sheet of ice. This is also known as ice-floe, which is 15 feet thick in places. All this ice is constantly on the move.

There is no life on the Antarctic. Terrific winds blow off the south polar ice-dome⁹ and mix with the westerly winds that flow around the world. The polar winds then either return to the pole or send storms across the South Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. Like the Antarctic's cold air the 'Antarctic bottom water' moves through the seas cooling all the oceans and thus regulating the climate of the world.

The Arctic is much milder and less enigmatical¹⁰ to life. It is cold enough in winter but this cold is moderated by the presence of the sea under the ice-pack. In summer the Arctic warms up. As much as 92° Fahrenheit

⁶ for north polar aurora

⁷ for south polar aurora

⁸ the regions of the upper atmosphere containing ions

⁹ half-spherical structure of the Antarctic covered with ice

is recorded at Verkhoyansk which is in the Arctic circle. It is this warming up which gives life a chance in the Arctic. Vegetation like moss, lichen¹⁰ and algae¹¹ is seen. Many kinds of flowering plants appear. Water plants and marsh grasses take root during summer. New soil is constantly created by these plants. This takes place only at the surface level. Below is the permafrost¹² which kills all life when winter comes.

The land formation of the Arctic is different from that of the Antarctic. The Arctic is mostly flat and open. The Antarctic is spiny¹³ and mountainous. The valleys are all bare and wind-swept. Mount Erebus is the highest mountain, rising 12,000 feet above sea-level.

EXERCISES

1. What do you understand when 'poles apart' is used in a sentence like this :
Although John and Jack are of the same age they are poles apart in their thinking.
2. What is the difference between ice-floe and barrier-ice ?
3. Why are mock suns and mock moons visible in the polar skies ?
4. What are the similarities between the Arctic and the Antarctic ?

¹⁰ any of a large group of plants

¹¹ a sea-weed or related plant

¹² permanent ice

¹³ having a spine or an understructure ; having sharp edge-like parts

8. A Hero

For Swami events took an unexpected turn. Father looked over the newspaper he was reading under the hall lamp and said, "Swami, listen to this : News has been received about the bravery of a village lad who, while returning home by the jungle path, came face to face with a tiger..." The paragraph described the fight the boy had with the tiger and his flight up a tree where he stayed for half a day till some people came that way and killed the tiger.

After reading it through, father looked at Swami fixedly and asked, "What do you say to that ?" Swami said, " I think he must have been a very strong and grown-up person, not at all a boy. How could a boy fight a tiger ?"

"You think you are wiser than the newspaper?" Father sneered. "A man may have the strength of an elephant and yet be a coward ; whereas another may have the strength of a consumptive¹ but having courage he can do anything. Courage is everything; strength and age are not important."

Swami disputed the theory. "How can it be, father ? Suppose I have a lot of courage, what could I do if a tiger attacked me ?"

"Leave alone strength, can you prove you have courage ? Let me see if you can sleep alone tonight in my office room". A frightful proposition, Swami thought. He had always slept beside his granny in the passage, and any change in this arrangement kept him trembling and awake all night. He hoped at first that his father was only joking. He mumbled weakly, "Yes", and tried to change the subject ; he said very loudly and with a great deal of enthusiasm, "We are going to admit even elders in our cricket club hereafter. We are buying brand new bats and balls. Our captain has asked me to tell you..."

"We'll see about it later," father cut in. "You must sleep alone hereafter." Swami realised that the matter had gone beyond his control :

¹ a person suffering from tuberculosis

from a challenge it had now become a plain command.

"From the first of next month I'll sleep alone, father."

"No, you must do it now. It is disgraceful, sleeping beside granny or mother like a baby. You are in the Second Form and... I don't at all like the way you are being brought up," he said.

Swami's father sat gazing gloomily at the newspaper on his lap. Swami prayed that his father might lift the newspaper once again to his face so that he might slip away to his bed and fall asleep before he could be called again. As if in answer to his prayer father rustled the newspaper and held it up before his face. And Swami rose silently and tiptoed away to his bed in the passage. Granny was sitting up in her bed, and remarked, "Boy, are you already feeling sleepy? Don't you want to hear a story?" Swami made wild gesticulations² to silence his granny, but that good lady saw nothing. So Swami threw himself on his bed and pulled the blanket over his face.

Granny said, "Don't cover your face. Are you really very sleepy?" Swami leant over and whispered, "Please, please, shut up, granny. Don't talk to me, and don't let anyone call me even if the house is on fire. If I don't sleep at once I shall perhaps die..." He turned over, curled, and snored under the blanket till he found his blanket pulled away.

Father was standing over him. "Swami, get up," he said. He looked like an apparition³ in the semi-darkness of the passage, which was dimly lit up by light reaching there from the hall lamp. Swami stirred and groaned as if in sleep. Father said, "Get up, Swami!"

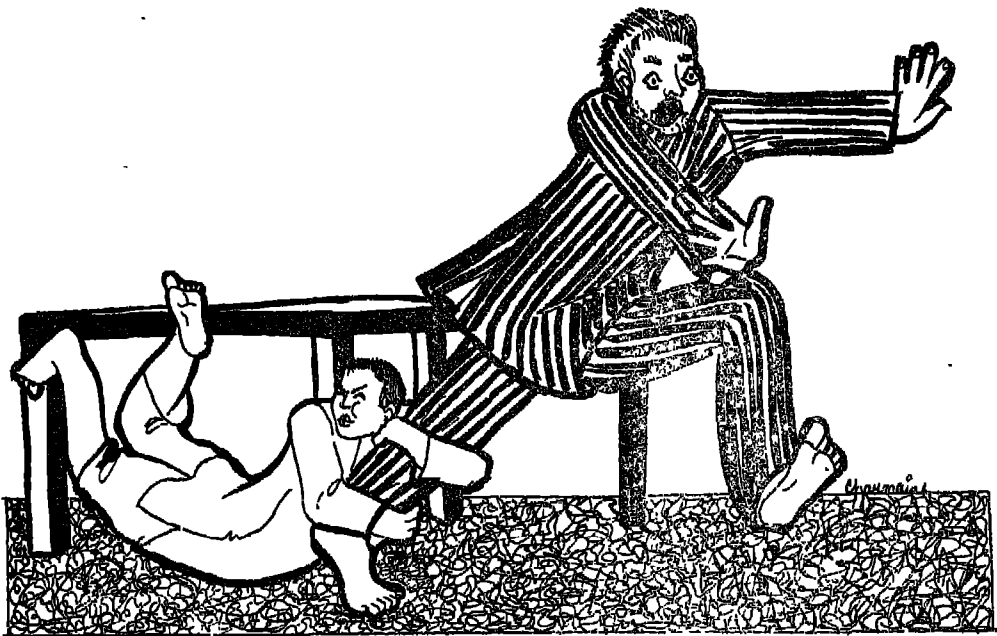
Granny pleaded, "Why do you disturb him?"

"Get up, Swami," he said for the fourth time and Swami got up. Father rolled up his bed, took it under his arm and said, "Come with me." Swami looked at granny, hesitated for a moment and followed his father into the office room. On the way he threw a look of appeal at his mother and she said, "Why do you take him to the office room? He can sleep in the hall, I think." "I don't think so," father said, and Swami walked behind him slowly with bowed head.

"Let me sleep in the hall, father," Swami pleaded. "Your office room

² movements of hands and arms to express ideas and feelings

³ a strange figure appearing suddenly and thought to be a ghost



is very dusty and there may be scorpions behind your law books.”

“There are no scorpions, little fellow. Sleep on the bench if you like.”

“Can I have a lamp burning in the room?”

“No. You must learn not to be afraid of darkness. It is only a question of habit. You must cultivate good habits.”

“Will you at least leave the door open?”

“All right. But promise you will not roll up your bed and go to your granny’s side at night. If you do it, mind you, I will make you the laughing-stock⁴ of your school.”

Swami felt cut off from humanity. He was pained and angry. He didn’t like the strain of cruelty he saw in his father’s nature. He hated the newspaper for printing the tiger’s story. He wished that the tiger hadn’t spared the boy, who didn’t appear to be a boy after all, but a monster.⁵

As night advanced and the silence in the house deepened, his heart beat faster. He remembered all the stories of devils and ghosts he had heard.

⁴ an object of scornful laughter

⁵ an abnormal boy

How often had his chum, Mani, seen the devil in the banyan tree at the end of the street ? And what about poor Munisami's father who spat out blood because the devil near the river's edge slapped his cheek when he was returning home late one night...?

And so on and on his thoughts continued. He was faint with fear. A ray of light from the street lamp strayed in and cast shadows on the wall. Through the stillness all kinds of noises reached his ears—the ticking of the clock, the rustling of leaves, sounds of snoring and the humming of some unknown insects. He covered himself with the blanket as if it were an armour, covered himself so completely that he could hardly breathe. Every moment he expected the devils to come up and clutch at his throat or carry him away. There was the instance of his old friend in the fourth class who suddenly disappeared and was said to have been carried off by a ghost to Siam or Nepal.

Swami hurriedly got up and spread his bed under the bench and crouched⁶ there. It seemed to be a much safer place. He shut his eyes tight and encased himself in his blanket once again and unknown to himself fell asleep, and in sleep he saw terrible dreams. A tiger was chasing him. His feet stuck to the ground. He tried hard to escape but his feet would not move ; the tiger was at his back, and he could hear its claws scratch the ground...scratch, scratch, and then a light thud...Swami tried to open his eyes but his eye-lids would not open and the frightening dream continued. It threatened to continue all his life. Swami groaned in despair.

Using his utmost efforts he opened his eyes. He put his hand out to feel his granny's presence at his side, as was his habit, but he only touched the wooden leg of the bench. And his lonely state came back to him. He sweated with fright. And now what was this rustling ? He moved to the edge of the bench and stared in the darkness. Something was moving down. He lay gazing at it in horror. His end had come. He became desperate.⁷ He knew that the devil would presently pull him out and tear him to shreds,⁸ and so why should he wait ? As it came nearer he crawled out from under

⁶ lay on the ground with limbs drawn close to his body in fear

⁷ one who has lost all hope and is ready to do anything regardless of danger

⁸ very small pieces

the bench and hugged⁹ it with all his might, and used his teeth on it like a mortal weapon.

"*Aiyo* ! something has bitten me". There was an agonised cry which was followed by a heavy tumbling and falling amidst furniture. In a moment father, cook and a servant came in carrying a light.

And all three of them fell on the burglar who lay amidst the furniture with a bleeding ankle.

Congratulations came showering on Swami the next day. His classmates looked at him with respect, and his teacher patted his back. The headmaster said that he was a true scout. Swami had bitten into the flesh of one of the most notorious houses-breakers of the district and the police were grateful to him for it.

The Inspector said, "Why don't you join the police when you grow up ?" Swami said for the sake of politeness, "Certainly, I will," though he had quite made up his mind to be an engine driver, a railway guard, or a bus conductor, later in life.

When he returned home from the club that night, father asked, "Where is the boy ?"

"He is asleep."

"Already?"

"He didn't have a wink of sleep the whole of last night," said his mother.

"Where is he sleeping ?"

"In his usual place," mother said casually. "He went to bed at seven-thirty."

"Sleeping beside his granny again !" father said. "No wonder he wanted to be asleep before I should return home — clever boy !"

Mother lost her temper. "You let him sleep where he likes. You needn't risk his life again ..." Father mumbled as he went in to change : "All right, pamper and spoil him as much as you like. Only don't blame me afterwards..."

Swami, following the whole conversation from under the blanket, felt tremendously relieved to hear his father giving him up.

— R.K. Narayan

⁹ put the arms around and hold tightly

EXERCISES

1. What did Swami think of the boy who was reported to have fought with the tiger ?
2. Why did Swami's father want him to sleep alone ?
3. How did Swami react to his father's proposal ?
4. How did he feel when he was left alone in his father's office room at night ?
5. What kind of dreams did he have while he slept ?
6. What made him attack the burglar ?
7. Describe the kind of person Swami really was and what people took him to be.
8. Give your impressions of granny and of Swami's father.
9. "Courage is everything, strength and age are not important." Swami disputed the theory while his father very much believed in it. Who will you extend your support to ? Give your reasons for the stand you take.

Suggested Reading

1. *Swami and Friends* — R. K. Narayan
2. *Lawley Road and Other Stories* — R. K. Narayan

9. The Divided Horsecloth

In thirteenth century France there was a rich merchant who lived in a small town. As luck would have it, he made enemies with some men in the town who were stronger than he. Like a wise man he left the town for Paris along with his wife and an only son. By dint¹ of hard work and his polite ways the merchant became very popular with his neighbours. He was also able to get the king's patronage.²

For more than seven years he went about his business, buying and selling, putting aside a little of his earnings every day. In this way the wealthy merchant lived a happy, blameless life, till his wife died. The merchant and his son mourned her death for a long time.

The merchant's son grew into a handsome young man. His father planned to find a suitable bride for him. He was very keen to get his son married to a decent girl of high birth and breeding³ and from an honourable house.

Now there lived near the merchant's house three knights⁴ of noble lineage.⁵ The eldest of the three had a daughter of marriageable age. The merchant asked the knight for his daughter's hand in marriage for his son. The knight made enquiries about the merchant's assets.⁶ He replied frankly, "In money and wares I have nearly fifteen hundred pounds which I have gained in honest dealings. I will give my son half of all this."

The knight laughed at the offer and said, "No."

"Tell me then, what would you have me do?" asked the merchant.

"I want," said the knight, "you to give your son all your wealth. You yourself will have no legal⁷ claim to it. If you agree to this the

¹ means ; force

² support ; encouragement

³ training in good behaviour and decency

⁴ man of noble birth raised to honourable military rank (in the middle ages)

⁵ family line ; ancestry

⁶ anything of value owned by a person

⁷ according to law

marriage can be arranged, otherwise not."

For a while the merchant was in a fix.⁸ Then he made his decision and said, "It shall be done according to your wishes." Thus, before witnesses⁹, he divested¹⁰ himself completely of all his wealth and his son was married off to the knight's daughter.

For two years after the marriage the husband and wife lived a quiet and peaceful life. A son was born to them. The old merchant continued to live with them but he realised that by giving away everything to his son he had not acted wisely. He was subjected to insults and humiliations.¹¹ Thus twelve years passed. The merchant was now old and bent with age. His grandson grew up into a tall boy.

His son's wife had started hating the merchant so much that she kept on asking her husband to get rid of the old man. One day she said, "Husband, if you love me, send your father away. I lose all my appetite just at the sight of him."

"Wife," answered he, "this shall be done according to your wish."

Soon afterwards he told his father, "Father, leave our house. For twelve years we have given you food and shelter, we can't keep you any more. Now it is all over."

The old merchant begged his son not to turn him out of his house in his old age when he was ill and feeble,¹² but his son was determined to throw him out. The old man again pleaded with him, "Son, how will anybody accept me when you turn me out of the house which I've given you? Why should a stranger welcome that guest whom the son drives away from his own door? Why should I be received gladly by him to whom I have given nothing?"

"Father", said he, "right or wrong, I take the blame but you must go because we don't want you here."

The merchant was shocked at this and prepared to leave. He requested his son to permit him to take some cloth to protect him from the

⁸ difficult situation

⁹ person who was actually present at an event

¹⁰ remove ; take away from ; give up

¹¹ shame ; lower the dignity or respect of

¹² weak ; without energy

cold outside. This request was also not granted. However, the son agreed to give his father a horseloth — a piece of coarse¹³ cloth used as covering for horses. He asked his young son to go to the stable¹⁴ and give his grandfather the best horsecloth available there.

The clever boy said, "Granddad, come with me."

So the merchant went with him to the stable with a sad heart. The lad chose the best horsecloth he could find there. This he folded in two, and taking out his knife, divided the cloth into two portions. He then gave to his grandfather one half of the divided cloth.

"Child," said the old man, "what have you done? Why have you cut the cloth that your father has given me? Very cruelly have you treated me, for you were ordered to give me the horsecloth whole. I shall return and complain to my son about this."

"Go where you like," replied the boy, "for certainly you shall have nothing more from me."

The merchant went away from the stable.

"Son," he said, "punish your son for he has disobeyed your orders," and he told him everything.

The boy was rebuked¹⁵ by his father, and asked to give all the cloth, whereupon he said, "That, sir, I'll never do, for then how shall I pay you back when you're old? For, just as you have asked your father to leave your house so will I. I'll need the horsecloth then."



¹³ rough ; not fine

¹⁴ place where horses are kept

¹⁵ speak severely to somebody for his misbehaviour

The father listened to these words and sighed heavily. He repented¹⁶ of his evil intentions and turning to the merchant said, "Father, please stay in my house. I was being very wicked. Please forgive me. You are master and lord of everything that I possess. Henceforth you will live in comfort which is your right in this house."

And they lived happily ever after.

— *Bernier*

EXERCISES

1. Why did the merchant go to Paris with his family ?
2. Why was the merchant asked to leave his house and who saved him ?
3. On what condition did the knight allow his daughter to be married to the merchant's son ?
4. Supposing yourself to be the grandson, what other devices would you have thought of to help the old man ?
5. Give three important character traits of :
 - (a) the knight
 - (b) his daughter
 - (c) the grandson.

Suggested Reading

Great Stories of the World — Barratt H. Clark and Maxim Lieber

¹⁶ think with regret or sorrow

10. The Great Truth

This is the story of a German traveller who arrived at a great truth by error. This gentleman arrived at Amsterdam during the course of his journey. He went round the city and was deeply impressed by its beautiful buildings and busy people. He saw a house larger and more beautiful than any he had ever seen during all his travels. For a long time he gazed in wonder at the expensive building.

Finally he addressed a passerby, "Excuse me", he said, "can you tell me the name of the gentleman who owns this beautiful house with the windows full of all kinds of flowers?" But the man, who probably had something more important to attend to, and understood as little German as the questioner did Dutch, replied, "Kannitverstan," and went away. This is a Dutch word and means no more than, 'I cannot understand you.' But the traveller thought it to be the name of the owner of the grand building. "He must be a mighty rich man, that Mr. Kannitverstan," he said to himself, and walked away.

Walking through the narrow streets of the town he came to the harbour. There were many ships in the harbour and he had never seen so many of them in his life. His eyes fell on a large merchant-ship that was being unloaded. The cargo¹ consisted of all kinds of wares² from distant lands.

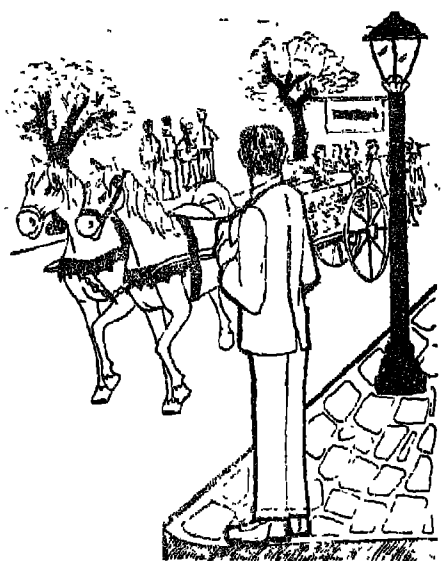
After he had watched for a long time, he asked a man who was carrying a crate³ on his shoulders the name of the person for whom the ship had brought all these wares. "Kannitverstan" was the answer.

Then he thought : "So that's how it is ; if the ships bring him such riches, no wonder he can build houses with potted flowers in the windows". So he went away sorrowfully thinking how poor a man he was

¹ goods carried in a ship, aircraft or any other vehicle

² manufactured goods

³ large wooden box for transporting goods



among so many rich people in this world. But just as he was thinking, "I wish I, too, would be as well off as this Mr. Kannitverstan some day," he saw a grand funeral procession in the street. White horses were pulling a black hearse⁴ slowly, as though they were aware that they were carrying a dead man to his grave. A large number of friends and acquaintances of the dead man followed silently. Our stranger remained standing in respect with his hat in his hand until the last man in the procession had passed him. Then he asked the last

mourner⁵ in a low voice, "The dead man whose funeral you are going to attend must have been a good friend of yours. Who was he?"

"Kannitverstan," was the answer.

A few large tears tumbled down from the eyes of our journeyman and he felt sad and relieved at once. "Poor Kannitverstan!" he exclaimed. What now remains of all your riches? Exactly what I shall get one day from my poverty: a linen shroud⁶ and of all your beautiful flowers, you have, perhaps, a rose on your cold breast." With these thoughts he accompanied the funeral procession to the grave as though he belonged to it. He saw the supposed Mr. Kannitverstan being lowered in his resting place.

He left with the others and went away with a light heart. At an inn⁷ where German was understood, he ate his dinner. Whenever afterwards his heart became heavy because so many people in this world were rich and he was poor, he only thought of Mr. Kannitverstan of Amsterdam.

⁴ hearse or car for carrying dead bodies at a funeral
⁵ person who attends a funeral as relative or friend
⁶ cloth wrapped round a dead body
⁷ rest house

— of his big house, his rich ship, and his narrow grave.

— *Johann Petel Hebel*

EXERCISES

1. Describe the house that attracted the traveller.
2. What is the meaning of the word 'Kannitverstan' ?
What did the traveller think it meant ?
3. The traveller felt sad and relieved when he saw the funeral procession.
(a) Why did he feel sad ?
(b) Why did he feel relieved ?
4. Give a word that best describes the German traveller.
5. Why did the thought of Mr. Kannitverstan comfort the German traveller ?

Suggested Reading

1. *German Stories and Tales*
2. *Spanish Stories and Tales*
3. *French Stories and Tales*

11. Exploring the World

The earth is a strange and marvellous place. It is very beautiful, and it produces all kinds of flowers and fruits. But it can be terrible too ; the burning sun of the desert has bleached¹ the bones of many an unlucky traveller ; shrieking winds have dashed men's homes to pieces, and raging floods have swept them away.

• For ages, most of the world was unknown to men. They made their homes in some little corner of its vast spaces and offered prayers and sacrifices to the gods who, they thought, controlled the terrors² of storm and flood. But slowly, through the long centuries, they began to explore and to find out what lay beyond the hills that sheltered their homes. They ventured³ in boats on the rivers and across the seas, creeping at first along the shores, each new voyager going a little further than the last into the unknown.

Early Ideas of the Shape of the Earth

To these early travellers, the earth seemed to be a vast, flat world, and they feared what would happen if they reached the edge. They believed that if they sailed towards the south the sea would become so hot that it would boil, and life would be impossible. To the north they thought it must be too cold for living things. Only 500 years ago, nearly all men believed this and when Portuguese sea-captains began to sail southwards along the coast of Africa, many seamen revolted and refused to go further.

But clever men said that the earth was not flat, but a ball or sphere. People laughed at the idea. How could there be people or trees on the other side of the world ? Would men walk on their hands or trees grow

¹ made white

² objects of great fear

³ dared ; exposed themselves to danger and risk

with their roots upwards ? And how would they stay on the other side ? Surely they would fall off.

Now we know that the clever men were right. The earth is a ball, yet people on the other side do not fall off, but live just as we do. For the earth is like a great magnet, drawing all things towards itself and wherever a man may be on earth, he feels that towards the earth is 'down' and away from the earth is 'up'.

In ancient times Phoenicians⁴ and Greeks, Chinese and Arabs, Indians and others made voyages of discovery, but much of the world still remained unknown, and no clear idea of the size and shape of the earth existed. Most of the knowledge gained by these early voyagers was lost and forgotten during the dark ages after the fall of Rome.

About five hundred years ago men began once more to be filled with a desire to find out about the unknown oceans and lands which stretched around them on every side. Explorers set out from Portugal, Spain, France, Holland and England, and gradually discovered the other continents.

First, the Portuguese began to explore the west coast of Africa. Year after year they sent out ships which sailed along the coast, each daring a little further south. At first when they landed they found that everything was made hot and dry by the burning winds which blew off the Sahara Desert. They thought of the stories they had heard, that the sun would burn their faces black, and that the sea would boil. Terrified, they turned back. At the next venture they went a little further. It grew hotter still, the sun was right overhead, and the desert seemed to stretch on for ever. They returned to Portugal, but Prince Henry the Navigator⁵ sent out other ships. At last, after sailing nearly 3,000 kilometres from Portugal they passed the desert and came to grasslands, and then to great rivers flowing through dense forested lands where tribes of very dark-skinned people lived. They returned with the good news and with Negroes whom they sold as slaves in the market at Lisbon.

In the next trip sailors found that the coast ahead turned to the east. They thought that they had sailed round the whole of Africa, and that the way was now open for them to go straight to India, and to other

⁴ people of Phoenicia, an ancient country, now forming a part of the Lebanon and Syria

⁵ an explorer by sea

lands of the east of which they had heard. For hundreds of kilometres they followed the coast to the east, but, then, to their disappointment, it turned southwards again, still past dense forest and great rivers and the parched and sandy lands of another desert.

At last Bartholomew Diaz was blown by a strong wind far to the south-east, and he entered the Indian Ocean, having rounded the Cape of Good Hope, the southern tip of Africa. Then he returned to Portugal.

Before the Portuguese had time to explore the east coast of Africa, the Spaniards and the English had discovered North and South America. Columbus, an Italian in the service of the King of Spain, had risked the unknown terrors of a voyage to the far west across the Atlantic Ocean. He sailed in a little 100 ton ship called the Santa Maria, and found the American islands which are now called the West Indies. A few years later John Cabot sailed from Bristol in a tiny open ship and discovered Newfoundland⁶ and the coast of North America; Columbus made three more voyages and reached the mainland of South America, although he thought it was Asia.

While this was happening in the Atlantic, the Portuguese captain, Vasco da Gama, sailed round the south of Africa and reached India, and so the continent of Asia was first reached by sea from Europe.

Still no one knew what lay beyond the new continent of America, and whether the world was really round, because if it was it would be possible to sail past America and reach Asia. In 1519 Ferdinand Magellan, another Portuguese in the service of the King of Spain, decided to find out. He crossed the Atlantic, sailed round the south of South America, and then set course across the unknown ocean he had discovered, and which he called the Pacific. His journey was far longer and more difficult than that of Columbus. When his ships neared the equator, they were becalmed⁷. Day after day the sails flapped idly. The stores of food were used up completely. "We ate only old biscuit brought to powder, and stinking from the dirt which the rats had made on it from eating the good biscuit, and we drank water which was yellow and stinking. We also ate the hides with which the mainyard was covered. These we left four or

⁶ an island off Canada

⁷ became motionless from lack of wind

five days in the sea and then we broiled⁸ them to eat; ~~also the sawdust of wood and even rats, which were sought out eagerly and sold for half a ducat⁹ each.~~ Scurvy¹⁰ struck down many of the crew; some died, and most of the others were too weak to work. They struggled on, and at last reached the islands off the shores of Asia. There Magellan was killed in the fighting with the native people but one of his ships continued the voyage and crossing the Indian Ocean, returned to Spain round South Africa — the first ship to have sailed right round the world. The voyage had taken three years!

There were still two more continents to discover. There were thousands of kilometres of coastline in America and Asia to be explored and vast numbers of islands to be located in the world's great oceans.

In 1642 the Dutch explorer Tasman sailed all round Australia, though without seeing any of the southern and eastern coasts, and discovered New Zealand in a long, two-year voyage. Nearly 130 years later, James Cook, a great English seaman, explored the east coast of Australia and then sailed round the world in the Southern Ocean, making it clear that the great southern continent which many people believed to exist must be much nearer to the South Pole than had been thought. The coasts of this last continent of Antarctica were gradually explored during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The Size of the Earth

For a long time men wondered how big the earth was. The voyage of Magellan gave them a rough idea. Now we know exactly. It is large, very large, compared with the small part of it that holds our home and town. If you could walk round the world, straight across sea and land, covering nearly 16 kilometres everyday, it would take you about seven years to get round, for it is 40,000 kilometres in circumference. In ancient times this would have seemed a tremendous distance, but it does not seem so large

⁸ cooked by direct contact with fire

⁹ a gold coin formerly much used in many European countries

¹⁰ a disease marked by bleeding and sponginess of the gums due to lack of fresh vegetables and consequently of vitamin C

to us now. An aeroplane travelling at 1,600 kilometres an hour could fly round it in just over one day flying non-stop.

— *L. F. Hobley*

EXERCISES

A

1. What did the early travellers think about the earth ?
2. Why do the people on the other side of the earth not fall off ?
3. What did the early Portuguese seamen find when they first landed on the African coast and what was their reaction ?
4. By which route did Vasco da Gama reach India ?
5. What was Ferdinand Magellan's mission ? Describe some of his experiences.
6. How big is the earth really ?
7. The heads and tails of these sentences have been mixed up. Write them out correctly .

a) The Portuguese	discovered the West Indies.
b) Columbus	explored the coasts of West Africa.
c) Magellan's ship	discovered Newfoundland.
d) John Cabot	first sailed round South Africa to India.
e) Vasco da Gama	sailed round the world.
8. The letters of some of the words in these sentences are jumbled. Write out the sentences correctly.

a) Prince YNEHR the RAAITVGNO sent ships to explore the coast of CRAFAI.
b) AIDZ was the first to go round the PEAC OF ODOG EOHP.
c) SAMNAT, who was a CDHTU sea-captain, sailed round SRATUILAA.
d) MEJAS OCKO explored the TRESHUON CNAEO.
e) LLAGNEAM was the first European to cross the CIIPCAF.

B

- 1 The earth is very beautiful, but it can be terrible too. Give three examples each of its beauty and terror.
2. What do you think was the result of all the discoveries made by the daring explorers in the past ?

12. The Star Ducks

Rafferty, top reporter¹ of *The Times*, stopped his car in front of old Alsop's farm-house. He parked it under a walnut tree in the drive. He got out and looked round him in some surprise. Where was the crowd that he had expected to see there? Where were the police? Where was the ambulance? There was not a soul to be seen. His reporter's eye noted the peaceful old house, the neglected garden, the fences that were falling down, the chicken-houses and the muddy farmyard. He pushed open the broken front gate and climbed the shaking steps that led to the back porch².

Mr. Alsop came out to the porch to meet him. "How do you do?" he said.

Rafferty pushed his hat back a little. "I'm Rafferty of *The Times*," he said.

"Rafferty?" said Mr. Alsop in a puzzled tone. It was clear that he did not read *The Times*.

"I'm a reporter. Somebody just phoned us that a plane's crashed round here."

Mr. Alsop looked thoughtful and scratched his head. And then he answered slowly, "No."

Rafferty saw at once that Alsop was a very slow thinker and so he gave him time to think. Mr. Alsop shook his head slowly and again said, "No...."

The door squeaked³ and Mrs. Alsop came out to the porch. She looked a little brighter than her husband and so Rafferty spoke to her, repeating his information. She shook her head slowly and said, "No...", just as her husband had done.

¹ one who reports news for newspaper, magazine, etc.

² a covered structure at the entrance to a building

³ made a sharp, penetrating sound

Rafferty turned round, his hand on the railing of the porch, ready to go down the steps and back to his car.

"I guess it was a phony⁴ message," he said. "We get lots of them. Somebody said that he'd seen an aeroplane come down in your field, in flames, that is, with flames coming out of the back of it."

Mrs. Alsop's face lighted up. "Ohhhhh!" she said. "Yes, that's right. But it didn't crash. It just came down. And it isn't an aeroplane really. It hasn't got any wings on it."

Rafferty stopped with his foot lifted over the top step. "I beg your pardon?" he said. "An aeroplane came down? And it didn't have wings?"

"That's right," Mrs. Alsop said. "It's out there now in the barn⁵. It belongs to some folks⁶ who bend iron with a hammer."

"Ha! Ha!" thought Rafferty. "This smells like news."

"May be it's a helicopter?" he said.

Mrs. Alsop shook her head. "No, I don't think so. It doesn't have any of those fan things on it. But you can go and see for yourself if you like. You take him to the barn, Alfred. And see that he walks on the planks because the ground's so muddy."

Mr. Alsop led Rafferty round the house on the planks that had been placed over the mud. "Well," thought Rafferty, "in my job I've had to meet a lot of strange folks and real idiots, but I've never met any as dumb as these Alsops."

"I've got a fine lot of chickens this year," Mr. Alsop said slowly. "Never had better. But do tell me, Mr. Rafferty, do you think that chickens will do well up there on a star?"

Rafferty, without thinking, looked up at the sky and his foot slipped off the plank into the mud.

"Up there on a what?"

"I said up there on a star", said Mr. Alsop in his slow, calm way.

They had now reached the door of the barn and Mr. Alsop was trying to push it open. "You have to push hard," he said, "it sticks."

⁴ false, fake

⁵ a building for storing hay and keeping cattle

⁶ people, common people



Rafferty put his shoulder to the door and pushed it open. He looked inside and instantly knew that here indeed was a story.

The object inside the barn looked like an enormous plastic balloon that was only half blown up. It was round on top and its flat bottom rested on the straw covered floor. It was just small enough to go through the barn door. "It's somebody's crazy⁷ idea of a space ship", thought Rafferty and instantly in his mind he saw the headlines that would appear in very large letters on the front page of his newspaper :

LOCAL FARMER BUILDS ROCKET SHIP
FOR MOON VOYAGE

"Mr. Alsop," he said hopefully, "you didn't build this thing, did you ?"

⁷ disordered in mind ; mad

Mr. Alsop laughed and said, "I don't know anything about building things like that. Some friends of mine came in it."

Rafferty gave him a sharp look, thinking that he was joking, but the farmer's face was quite serious.

"Who are these friends of yours?" he asked.

"Well, it sounds a bit funny," said Mr. Alsop, "but I don't really know. You see, they don't talk in a way I can understand. In fact, they don't talk at all. The only thing that we've been able to make out is that their name means bending iron with a hammer."

Rafferty, who was walking closer to the machine to get a better look, gave a sudden cry of pain and rubbed his leg.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you, Mr. Rafferty," Mr. Alsop said, "all round the thing there's a kind of wall that you can't see. And if you knock against it, it hurts⁸, doesn't it? It's there to keep children away."

"These friends of yours, Mr. Alsop, where are they now?"

"They're over at the house," Mr. Alsop replied. "You can see them if you'd like to. But you'll find it hard to talk to them. They're rather different from us."

"Come on. Let's go," said Rafferty and led the way across the muddy farmyard towards the house.

"These folks came here the first time about six years ago," Mr. Alsop began to explain. "They wanted some of our eggs. They thought that they might be able to raise chickens up there, where they live. But it took them three years to get home and, of course, in that time the eggs went bad. And so the folks turned round and came straight back for some more. This time I've made them a nesting-box so that they can raise chickens on the way home." He gave a sudden laugh. "I can just see that ship-thing of theirs, far up in the sky, full of my chickens!"

Rafferty climbed up on to the back porch in front of Mr. Alsop and hurried through the back door into the kitchen. Mr. Alsop caught his arm to stop him when they were at the door of the living room.

"Mr. Rafferty, my wife can talk to these people better than I can. Let her do the talking. She and the lady get on quite well together."

"Okay," said Rafferty. He pushed Mr. Alsop gently through the door

⁸ to cause physical harm, pain, etc.

and entered the room close behind him. He stood in the doorway and stared.

Mrs. Alsop was sitting in an armchair facing her visitors, a man and a woman. They were sitting side by side on the couch,⁹ waving their slender antennae¹⁰ to and fro. Their faces were purple and quite without any expression. Their eyes were round and very large. Their faces seemed to have been painted on.

Mrs. Alsop turned towards Rafferty with a smile. "Mr. Rafferty," she said, "these are the people who came to see us in that aeroplane." She raised her finger and the two strangers instantly bent their antennae towards her. "This is Mr. Rafferty," she told them, speaking in a loud voice as if she were talking to people who were hard of hearing. "He's a newspaper reporter. He wanted to see your aeroplane."

Rafferty was too astonished to speak but he managed to nod. The strangers curled up their antennae and nodded in return. The lady scratched her side with her left claw.

Rafferty said to himself, "It's a trick. It must be a trick. Now, Rafferty, you're a smart fellow, don't let them take you in. Be careful, Rafferty."

He turned to Mrs. Alsop and in a voice that he tried to keep from shaking, asked, "What did you say their names were, Mrs. Alsop?"

"Well, we don't really know," she answered. "You see, they can only make pictures for you. They point those funny horn-things of theirs at you and they just think. That makes you think too — the same thing that they are thinking. I asked them what their names were and then I let them think for me. They put in my head the picture of a man hammering some iron on an anvil¹¹. So I guess his name is something like man-who-bends-iron. It's a kind of Red Indian name, may be."

Rafferty looked at the people who bent iron and then at Mrs. Alsop.

"Do you suppose," he asked, "they would talk to me. That is, think to me?"

Mrs. Alsop looked rather worried.

⁹ a piece of furniture ; an easy chair on which more than one person may sit

¹⁰ plural of antenna ; moveable sense organs on the head of some insects ; a device for giving/receiving electro-magnetic sound signals

¹¹ a heavy block of iron on which metal may be forged

"I'm sure that they'd be glad to, Mr. Rafferty. The only thing is, it's pretty hard at first. Hard for you, I mean."

"I'll try it," Rafferty said. He took out a cigarette and lighted it. In his confusion, he held the match until it was burning his fingers.

"Just throw it in the coal bucket," said Mr. Alsop.

Rafferty threw the match into the coal bucket.

"Ask these er-er- people where they come from, will you?"

Mrs. Alsop smiled. "I asked them that once before," she said, "and I didn't get a very clear picture. But I'll have another try."

Mrs. Alsop raised her finger. Instantly the strangers bent their antennae towards her, pointing directly at the middle of her forehead.

"This young man," shouted Mrs. Alsop, "wants to know where you folks come from."

Mr. Alsop nudged¹² Rafferty. "Just hold up your finger when you want an answer," he said.

Rafferty felt like a fool but he held up his finger.

The lady whose husband bent iron bent her antennae down until they pointed towards Rafferty's forehead, straight between the eyes. Then suddenly his brain seemed to change into rubber and he felt that someone was twisting it and beating it into a new shape. He felt very frightened. And then he seemed to be flying through space, through a great white vacuum¹³. Stars and meteors¹⁴ went flashing by him until he came to a great star of dazzling brightness. The picture disappeared. Rafferty found that he was shaking all over and was almost too weak to stand. His burning cigarette was on the floor. Mr. Alsop bent and picked it up.

"You dropped your cigarette, Mr. Rafferty. Here it is. Did you get your answer?"

Rafferty's face was as white as a sheet.

"Mr. Alsop," he cried. "Mrs. Alsop! This is no trick. It's all true. These creatures have really come from space!"

Mr. Alsop said calmly, "Sure, they've come a long way."

"Do you know what this means?" Rafferty asked, wild with excite-

¹² touched or pushed gently to attract attention

¹³ a space absolutely without matter; empty

¹⁴ shooting stars

ment and trying in vain to keep his voice down. "Do you know that this is the most important thing that has ever happened in the history of the world? Do you know that this is — yes, it is, it's the biggest story that ever was? And it's happening to me, do you understand?" He was shouting now. "Where's your phone?"

"We don't have a telephone," said Mr. Alsop in his slow way. "But there's one down at the petrol-station. Mr. Rafferty, these people have to leave in a few minutes. Why don't you stay and see them off. The chickens are already on board and the nesting box and the feed."

"No!" Rafferty shouted. "They can't leave yet! Listen, I've got to phone! I've got to get a photographer!"

"Mr. Rafferty," said, Mrs. Alsop, "we tried to make them stay for supper but they just have to set out at a certain time. They have to go out with the tide — or something like that."

"It's not the tide," said Mr. Alsop. "It's the moon. It's a question of where the moon is."

The two strangers from space were sitting quietly on the couch, their claws folded in their laps and their antennae curled to show that they were not listening-in to other people's thoughts.

Rafferty looked wildly round the room for the telephone that he knew was not there. "I must get the editor," he was thinking. "He'll know what to do. Or will he say that I'm crazy?" He did not know what to do. "Do something," his brain urged him. "This is the biggest story that ever was and you just stand here doing nothing."

"Listen, Alsop!" Rafferty shouted. "Have you got a camera? Any kind of camera?"

"Oh, sure," Mr. Alsop said. "I've got a fine camera. It's a box camera but it takes good pictures. I'll show you some that I've taken of my chickens."

"No, no! I don't want to see your pictures. I want the camera!"

Mr. Alsop went into the parlour¹⁵ to look for his camera and Rafferty could see him feeling his way among the many objects on the top of the cupboard.

"Mrs. Alsop," shouted Rafferty, "I've got a lot of questions to ask them."

¹⁵ a reception room for entertainment of guests

"Ask away," she answered cheerfully. "They won't mind."

But what could he ask these creatures from space? He had their names. He knew what they had come for. He knew where they had come from ...

Mr. Alsop's voice came from the parlour.

"Ethel, have you seen my camera?"

"No, I haven't," Mrs. Alsop answered sharply. "You put it away yourself."

"It's a pity that I haven't got any films for it," said Mr. Alsop.

It was then that the strangers from space turned their antennae towards each other. They seemed to have reached a decision because both of them, at the same instant, got up and flew like fire-flies¹⁶ out of the door, making for the barn.

Rafferty rushed after them, screaming¹⁷ to them to stop. But before he was half-way to the barn, the plastic balloon came sliding out. There was a hissing sound and the thing disappeared into the clouds.

Rafferty was left behind, staring at a steaming patch in the mud and a little circle of burnt earth. He sank down on the ground. The greatest story that ever was had just flown off into the sky! Now he had no pictures, no proof, nothing to show that this marvel¹⁸ had happened. What facts had he? The man-who-bends-iron (that must mean Smith, he thought) and his wife had visited the Alfred Alsop farm that Sunday. They had left the same evening for their home in space with some crates of eggs.

Rafferty's brain began to clear. He rushed into the house.

"Alsop," he shouted. "Did those people pay you for those eggs?"

Mr. Alsop was standing on a chair in front of the china cupboard, still hunting for his box camera.

"Oh, sure," he said.

"Let me see the money!" Rafferty demanded.

"Oh, they didn't pay in money. They don't have any money. But when they were here six years ago, they brought us some of their eggs in xchange."

¹ a night-flying beetle giving out light

¹⁷ uttering a piercing cry of terror or surprise

¹⁸ to be filled with wonder

"Six years ago !" Rafferty cried in despair. Then he brightened. "Eggs ! What kind of eggs ?"

Mr. Alsop laughed. "I just don't know," he said. "We called them star ducks. The eggs were star-shaped. The poor old hen that set on them had an awful time because of the sharp points on them."

Mr. Alsop then climbed down from his chair.

"Star ducks aren't much good really," he said. "They look something like a little hippopotamus and something like a swallow, and they've got six legs. Only two of them lived and we ate them for Christmas."

Rafferty's brain was now working feverishly. He simply had to find some evidence¹⁹ that would show his editor and the whole world that his story was true. He went close up to Mr. Alsop and almost whispered to him, "You wouldn't know where the skeletons²⁰ of those star ducks are, would you ?"

Mr. Alsop looked puzzled. "Skeletons ? You mean the bones ? Oh, we gave the bones to the dog. That was five years ago and the dog's been dead for four years or more."

Rafferty picked up his hat like a man in a dream

"Thanks, Mr. Alsop," he said mechanically. "Thanks."

Rafferty stood on the porch and put his hat on. He pushed it back on his head. He stared up at the cloudy sky until he felt his head going round and round.

Mr. Alsop came out of the kitchen. He was wiping the dust off his box camera with his sleeve.

"Mr. Rafferty," he said, "I've found the camera."

Bill Brown

EXERCISES

Answer the following questions in single sentences.

1. Why did Rafferty, the reporter of *The Times*, rush to old Alsop's farm-house ?
2. What made Rafferty conclude that Alsop was a slow-thinking man ?

¹⁹ proof in support of something

²⁰ the supporting frame-work of a human being's or animal's body

3. What was the mission of the people from outer space when they called at Alsop's farm-house ?
4. Why was Rafferty so excited to meet the visitors from outer space ?
5. How did the space visitors indicate to Rafferty the place they had come from ?
6. Did the farmer have a telephone in his house ?
7. Why did Rafferty want a camera so urgently ?
8. Could Rafferty get any concrete proof of the space visitors' visit to the farm-house ?
9. Give three instances of humour in the story. Answer in three sentences.

13. The Wonderful Story of the Coconut

[One of the most remarkable trees in the world is the coconut palm. In this chapter we shall read the story of how it resists its enemies, protects its young, and performs many useful services for mankind. Coconut is now one of the most important articles of commerce. Tons of coconut oil and dried kernels are used in industry every year, and hundreds of thousands of people are engaged in manufactures in which coconut is used in some form or other.]

Children are fond of coconut. It is the biggest of all the nuts, and is indeed a wonderful fruit. It grows on a tall palm and is found in tropical countries round the seashore. The name was given to it by the Portuguese because, with the three marks or eye-spots at the end, it looked something like a monkey's face, and 'coco' is a Portuguese word for a bugbear¹ or a distorted mask².

Universal Provider

The coconut palm often grows over a hundred feet high, and has at the top a crown of large feather-like leaves twenty feet long. The flowers are white, and the nuts when they form are in huge bunches of twelve to twenty.

It is doubtful if any other plant in the world is useful to man in so many ways. A Chinese proverb declares that there are as many useful properties in the coconut palm as there are days in the year. And we also have a saying that the man who plants a coconut, plants, meat and drink, hearth and home, vessels and clothing for himself, and his children after him.

Indeed, people throughout the whole world benefit from the coconut palm. Not only do the natives of the lands where it grows benefit by it,

¹ an imagined object that causes fear

² a cover for the face used for disguise

but the people of other lands also make use of the coconut in some form every day of the year.

In hot countries the solid white part of the nut gives food to thousands of people, while the milk, or liquid inside the shell, provides them with drink. It has been pointed out that the coconut really acts as a filter for the water of malarious regions, for the roots absorb polluted liquid and purify it before passing it on to the nut.

The flower stalk yields a sweet juice which is boiled to produce sugar. Or the juice can be fermented to produce a spirit known as toddy. By squeezing the dry nut we get coconut oil, which serves as an excellent cooking medium.

Candles, Soap, and Margarine

The kernel of the coconut is broken into small pieces and then dried in the sun. This substance is the well-known copra, which is the principal export of many tropical lands. Vast quantities of it are imported by countries where coconut does not grow, and from the oil which it yields candles, soap, and margarine³ are made. During the purification process glycerine is obtained. From 500 gallons of copra, 25 gallons of coconut oil are produced.

The outside, or husk, is also very useful. The fibre surrounding the nut yields coir, which is made into ropes or woven into matting and doormats. Brushes and brooms are also made from it, and it provides an excellent stuffing for cushions.

The leaves of the coconut palm are used for thatching⁴, while the leaf-stalks constitute excellent rafters⁵ or posts for fencing. The fibrous covering at the base of the leaf is a natural cloth, and is employed for native hats, and for strainers. The timber of the tree is good for making furniture. The flat plates of the leaves yield the writing material on which many of the Buddhist manuscripts⁶ are inscribed.

³ a butter substitute made from animal or vegetable fats

⁴ a roof or covering made of straw, leaves, grass, etc.

⁵ the sloping beams of a roof on which the tiles, slates, etc. rest

⁶ books or papers written by hand, not printed

These are only a few of the uses to which the coconut is put for the benefit of man. Its wonder, however, is not confined to its many uses. When we examine the nut and know its life-story, we marvel more than ever.

Providing against Accident

In the first place, it grows so high up that if it were an ordinary nut, a fall of ninety or hundred feet on to the hard ground would crack it and it would be ruined. The coconut, however, has provided against such an accident. Outside the hard shell there is a mass of husk which cushions the fall.

The coconut has many parts : first an outer skin, then a fibrous covering, next a hard woody shell ; then there is the nutty portion which we eat, and finally the liquid or milk with the single seed or embryo from which a new coconut palm may eventually grow.

How did the milk get into the nut ? Let us look a little further into its history. The coconut is so appetising that it has many enemies who would like to eat it. Among them are the animals that climb trees. The nut, therefore, if it is to survive and produce a new tree, must take great care of itself. We have seen that it protects its shell from getting cracked by a cushion-like covering of fibre ; but if the shell is so hard how is the young plant, when it sprouts, able to get out of the shell ? How, indeed, is it able to sprout when no water can get in ?

Three Brown Pits

If we look at the narrow end of a coconut we notice three little brown pits on the surface. Two of these are blocked by quite hard material, which makes it less easy for enemies to find a way into the coconut. But the third one has a very thin covering which can be easily bored through with a pocket knife. Boys often do this to let out the milk before cracking the shell.

Now, if we examine a coconut we shall find that inside, opposite to this soft hole, there is small knob⁷ buried in the edible part of the coconut.

⁷ a round swelling or mass

This knob is the embryo, or seedling for whose benefit and protection the nut exists. The hole with the soft covering exists not really to let out the milk, but to let out the seedling.

The Milk in the Nut

Now, as the seed cannot get water from outside, the nut has to provide a good supply inside, and that is the real reason for the existence of the milk inside the coconut. As already explained, the water taken in through the roots, travels up the trunk, and after being filtered, is deposited inside the nut.

The hard, nutty part of the coconut which we eat is really deposited on the inside of the shell by the milk. Directly the seed begins to sprout and swell the little knob, absorbing the liquid till it eventually becomes a big, spongy mass which fills up the whole of the inside of the shell. At the same time a little sprout pushes its way out of the soft hole and produces a bud, the future stem and leaves of a coconut palm. Inside, a number of long threads absorb the water or the liquid, these being the future roots of the tree.

But as the little plant grows, the spongy mass inside the nut begins to absorb all the nutty part, and uses its store of oils and starches to feed the young plant until it is old enough to open its leaves to the sunshine and send its roots into the ground to obtain its own nourishment.

One Favoured Child

Plants which provide little or no protection for their seeds produce many seeds, so that one in a hundred or a thousand may survive. But the coconut has the largest and most richly stored and protected single seed among any known plant.

In this behaviour the coconut is doing what many human beings do today. Instead of having large families and leaving the children more or less helpless, they have only few children, who are given the very best of education and attention.

Emigrant Offspring

Another interesting thing about the coconut is that while it is so big as it hangs upon the tree, it is very light, and when it falls on to the beach and is washed into the sea, it does not sink, but floats and is often carried away to start its life like an emigrant^a in some new land overseas. That is why many isolated islands are covered with coconut palms, the only plant growing on their lonely stretches.

When it is full-grown and bearing fruit, a healthy palm will produce 120 coconuts every season, and a small group of trees is therefore sufficient to maintain a family in comfort.

Let us all remember what we ourselves owe to the coconut when we wash our hands with soap, when we put glycerine on our chapped skin or when we eat the margarine spread on our bread.

EXERCISES

A

1. Why was the coconut given its name by the Portuguese ?
2. Enumerate the five important uses of the coconut palm.
3. How does the coconut resist its enemies ?
4. How does the young plant get out of the hard shell ?
5. What is the real reason for the existence of the milk in the coconut ?
6. In what respect does the coconut resemble human beings ?
7. How are many isolated islands covered by coconut palms ?

B

8. Compare the coconut palm with any other plant or animal which, according to you, performs as many useful services for mankind as the coconut palm does.
9. List five uses of the coconut in the Indian kitchen.
10. "Plants which provide little or no protection for their seeds produce very many seeds, so that one in a hundred or a thousand may survive".
Give five examples of such plants.
11. What do you marvel at in the life-story of the coconut.

^a a person who leaves his own country in order to settle in another

14. The World Outside

Margery held the balloon and waited for the blackness in front of her eyes to clear. Oxygen starvation. There had been two dozen balloons to blow, and this was the last. She tied off its end and added it to the heap in the basket.

Very good. She was pleased. Under the swaying heap of balloons were small favours—tin trucks and trains, cap pistols and harmonicas and bags of marbles. She hoped there would be enough. She had no idea how many little boys Peter had invited.

The balloons stirred restlessly in the gentle wind as Margery moved away to check the room once more. It looked nice, she thought—but then, it always did. It was a pleasant room, pleasantly shaped. The house had been built in days when builders gave thought to the proportions of walls and ceilings and windows and doors.

Of course, as soon as the children came it would be a shambles¹. Caps would bang and balloons pop and the floor would be littered with coloured papers and cake crumbs and ribbons. No matter. It was Peter's house too.

But now, before the party, the dark, polished floor glowed in the vine-filtered light from the windows, the curtains moved in the breeze and the roses and lilies bloomed in the copper vase.

Margery's neighbours envied her the shine and quiet of her house. They reassured each other with the thought that they themselves had more important things to do than to be forever washing and cleaning. But it wasn't cleanliness that Margery loved, it was the house. She had lived here all her life. She had been born in the front bedroom; and when she married, her parents had given the house to her and Bob and moved to a small apartment in town. She tended the house with devotion, as if it were the family itself,—her own family and her mother's

¹ state of mud-die or confusion

before that — as if it were the tangible² shape of family love and safety.

Most of the furniture had been her mother's. It was old, but Margery was good with furniture and knew how to steady a wobbling³ table and recane chairs. Care and polish gave the sturdy old things a self-satisfied glow, as if they knew that they were loved.

Now she straightened a pillow, touched the roses with her finger-tips and went out through the silent dining room. White candles stood reflected on the dark table. The fruit on the big, painted plate was real; but the glass decanters⁴ on the side-board, now that no one could afford to fill them with liqueurs, were filled with coloured water. It was Margery's one concession to fakery⁵. She could not bear to put away the pretty bottles.

She looked once more at the cake waiting in the kitchen and crossed to the screened porch. Over it was another porch that opened from the back bedroom, and she and Bob slept there in the summer, listening to the wind in the apple tree and the soft thump of apples falling through the dark.

There would be games in the garden to start off the party. Pin the Tail on the Donkey. She would get Peter to make the donkey; it would keep him from exploding with impatience. She had prizes for the winners — goldfish and turtles from the ten-cent store.

The sun was hot. She moved across the lawn to look at the pear tree. It was weighted with pears, and she reached up to touch one, proud of it.

Suddenly there were yells and a loud cry of "Catch it! Catch it!" Something struck the trunk of the pear tree and bounced off. She jumped away. A football bounced again on the ground and lay still.

"Why didn't you catch it, you dummy?" cried the voice.

There was scuffling⁶ behind her rose-covered back fence, and then a boy appeared. He was tearing frantically at the roses. Petals showered down. "Ouch, damn it!" A rose was ripped off, and another.

"Stop that!" called Margery.

² clear and definite

³ moving unsteadily from side to side

⁴ vessel, usually of glass with a stopper, for storing wine

⁵ deception

⁶ from scuffle: rough fight or struggle

"I'm bleeding", yelled the boy. He scrambled over the fence and fell into the yard. More rose tendrils⁷ came down with him. Two other boys came over behind him, widening the gap he had made.

"Just a minute," said Margery. She picked up the ball and held it. "Will you boys just look at what you've done to the roses?"

They glared at her, sullen⁸, defensive.

"We want our ball," said the first one.

"Well, then, why not come up the driveway and get it like gentlemen?" Margery's voice was steady, but her heart was beating hard.

They said nothing.

"Are you boys from around here?"

"Yeah. Give us the ball, lady, and we'll get out."

"Yeah, give us the ball. It's our ball."

They moved closer. All three were dirty and tangled, and there was a quality of menace in their movements and the way their feet touched the grass.

Margery, standing in her own garden, was scared. The biggest boy was almost as tall as she was. His thick hair fell over his forehead to his eyes. He seemed balanced between fear and rage, like a wild animal met with suddenly in the woods. If she made a quick move, he might run away, frightened — or, frightened, he might spring at her throat.

Without moving his eyes from her, he took a stone from his bulging pocket and tossed it into the air a few times. Then he turned and threw it with incredible force at the house. It bounded off the screen of the porch. The others snickered⁹.

They aren't people at all, thought Margery. Not even savages¹⁰ — savages have dignity. They're like magic things without hearts, like something in a fairy story that has to be killed with a silver bullet. How could you talk to them?

She felt her own house standing behind her, and gathering up her courage, she said, "First put back those roses you tore down. Then you can have your ball."

⁷ thread-like part of a plant

⁸ silent and angry; dark and gloomy

⁹ short giggle; to laugh in this manner

¹⁰ primitive, uncivilised persons

The smallest of the three darted¹¹ forward. He snatched the ball from her hands and ran. The other two put out their tongues and made rude noises at her, then whirled and pounded away down the driveway. As the last boy skidded around the corner of the house, he grabbed a pale Patricia lily and jerked it from its stem. Screams of laughter floated back.

Margery leaned against the pear tree. Her knees were limp.

The screen door creaked and Peter ran out. "Hey, Mom, who were those kids?"

She smiled at him and started to touch his shoulder, but her hand was trembling, so she tucked it behind her against the bark of the tree. "I don't know, Petey. Have you ever seen them before? They said they lived in the neighbourhood."

"I guess so. I think they live over there by the Wilsons'. You know where those houses are?"

"Oh. Yes, I suppose they do."

When Margery was growing up, all the houses in the neighbourhood had been like her own — big and roomy, with angular lines softened by sleeping porches and elm trees, with gardens full of snowball bushes and sundials and birdbaths. The women made apple sauce and pies for their large families from the windfall apples, and birds rejoiced among the cherries and scattered them, half eaten, in the grass. In the winter the children went sledding¹² on Hillcrest Place all day long, until their mittens¹³ were armor-plated with snow and their mothers called them in through the gathering dark to warm and lighted houses.

But as fortunes declined and taxes rose, parts of the gardens were sold, leaving the big houses looking surprised on small plots, like a person standing on a shrinking rock while the tide rises around his feet. The zoning regulations were changed, and in the old back yards and side yards little box-shaped houses appeared. These houses had no gardens and no dining rooms. They each had one enormous window in the living room, through which anyone could see the husband in his undershirt watching television. These people, the new people, had big families, too.

¹¹ quick, sudden forward movement

¹² travelling by sledge on snow for fun

¹³ gloves

The women came out in flowered wrappers to sit on their doorsteps, each with a baby slung over one shoulder. The older children ran wild.

"Do you play with any of those kids, Peter?" Margery asked.

He shook his head. "They don't play fair," he said. "And they're mean. You know what one of them did to Arnie Rattner's cat, Mom? He took the cat and he —"

"Don't tell me, Pete. I don't want to hear about it. I'm sure it's bad." She walked over to the back fence. "What a mess!" she said sadly. She lifted the fallen tendrils into place. Then she knelt and began to collect the torn petals and leaves. The garden seemed vulnerable¹⁴ now, and no longer quite a safe place to be in. Maybe we'll have to get a higher fence, she thought. Maybe even a gate for the driveway.

"Mom, how long is it now?" Peter had followed her.

She looked at her watch. "It is now one forty-five. That makes two hours and fifteen minutes to go. And you still have to make the donkey for Pin the Tail — remember?"

"Oh, I forgot! Will you show me?"

She threw the leaves over the fence and crossed the grass, with Peter prancing¹⁵ at her side. She held the screen door for him, and together they went back into the quiet house. Margery felt its safety close around them, like a fortress against the world and the forces of anger and confusion at large there.

Promptly at four the guests began to stream in. Peter's best friends banged on the screen or simply walked in; the boys he knew less well rang politely and stood waiting, wrapped and ribboned presents held stiffly. "Here!" they would say, fierce with embarrassment, and shove the gifts at Peter.

Once inside, restraint vanished. They greeted each other with yells and punches. They ran through the house and slid on the rugs. They chased one another upstairs, their voices scaling higher. Peter yelled almost steadily with excitement.

Margery kept trying to count them, but they were fluid. They ran in circles, waving Peter's birthday presents. Ben Bradley hit Brian MacAllister for saying crayons were for girls. Margery put the vase of

¹⁴ not protected against attack

¹⁵ dancing or jumping happily

flowers on the mantelpiece, out of reach. Johnny Pierce was popping balloons with his fingernails, and little Carter Frailey, who was really too young, began to cry.

Margery herded them outside to organise the games. She was already hoarse from shouting over the din. But these were Peter's own friends. Most of them she knew by name; she knew who their mothers and fathers were. They ran and shouted, but when she called and held up the blindfold, they came. They respected clumps of lilies and veered away from the borders of daisies and petunias. They were normal children, normally raised. They did not menace.

Pin the Tail was a great success, and Ben, who won, was struck into silence by the prize of two small green turtles. "I thought it would be handkerchiefs, or something dumb," he murmured, bending over them. The others crowded around to poke them curiously, but Ben shouted them away. "Don't touch them!" he said. "It's bad for turtles to be touched." Margery answered a stream of questions: Would they get bigger? Did they really eat flies? Could they breathe under water? The goldfish, awarded for the sack race, were something of an anticlimax¹⁶.

Then food. The boys quieted over the more important business of eating and destroyed enormous quantities of cake and ice cream. Then they popped the rest of the balloons, scattering fragments of coloured rubber over the floor and furniture. They opened their favours, and the toot of harmonicas and crack of cap pistols reduced Carter Frailey to tears again. Margery comforted him with more ice cream.

Restless, they streamed back outside. Margery sat amid the wreckage and listened to their voices as they raced up the driveway and through the back yard, and from the shouts and bangs decided they were climbing the cherry tree and dropping down onto the garage roof. The more noise, the better the party, she thought. She began to gather up paper plates.

At six they swarmed back in again and finished the cake, and then some were fetched by their mothers and some went home on bikes.

The house was quiet. Margery, alone, collected bits of broken

¹⁶ sudden change or fall from something enjoyable that contrasts with the previous rise

balloons and dropped them into a paper bag. When Peter came in, looking pale and drained, she asked, "Everybody gone?"

"Yup."

"It was a good party, wasn't it?"

"Uh-huh. Look, Mom, I got a robot man."

"My goodness, who gave you that?"

"I forgot." He carried it upstairs to his room.

Margery closed the draperies¹⁷ and remembered, with a tightening in her stomach, the three boys in the garden.

When Bob came home he swatted his wife with the evening paper and kissed her. "Good party?" he asked.

"Very. Nothing broken, everything eaten."

"No birthday cake for supper?"

"Not a crumb!"

"Good." He held her gently, and Margery closed her eyes. Just themselves, just the family. All the little boys, the outsiders, were gone, leaving the three of them enclosed in their house like sea animals locked in the safety of their shells.

"Leggo," she murmured. "I must go start food."

She pressed the light switch at the door to the dining room.

The light went on. There was a crash and a howl. Margery screamed.

A little boy stood by the sideboard, his feet in a spreading puddle of golden water. A glass decanter lay at his feet. He was clutching its stopper.

"Where did you come from?" asked Bob.

The child started to cry.

"I didn't mean to scream," said Margery. "I thought he was one of the boys from the garden."

"What boys? What garden?"

"I'll explain later."

"I was drinking the whisky," wailed the child.

In the other decanters the coloured waters had gone down an inch or more.

Margery laughed unsteadily. "I hope it was good. You were at Peter's birthday party, weren't you?"

¹⁷ curtains

He nodded.

He was not one of the boys from the garden. He was the same breed, but smaller. One of their younger brothers, Margery thought — ragged and wild. But not yet dangerous.

“Did Peter invite you ?” asked Bob.

The boy shifted his feet. “I saw the other kids go in,” he muttered. “I heard them playing and stuff. So I came too. You going to tell my father ?”

“We’re going to walk you home,” said Bob.

Peter came in. “What was all that screaming ? On, nello !”

“Pete, do you know this boy ?”

“You live down on Hillcrest Place, don’t you ? You came to the party. His name’s Joe,” he reported to his parents.

“Well, we’re taking Joe home,” said Bob. “He seems to have been left over.”

Fireflies were out, and the street lights threw leafy shadows across the sidewalk. Peter dashed ahead and came skittering¹⁸ back, excited all over again by the unexpected. But Joe seemed sucked down into a heavy silence. He trudged¹⁹ along between Margery and Bob, scuffing²⁰ his shoes. Although neither of them touched him, Margery felt as if they were pushing him along the sidewalk one step at a time.

Five years ago Hillcrest Place had been woods, but now the area was covered with regular rows of small houses. The narrow strips of ground between them were patchy with dying grass ; the bulldozers had left no topsoil,²¹ and not even weeds grew in the yellow clay. The houses had not taken root either. They seemed set down lightly on top of the ground, like the little coloured houses in a Monopoly game.

Joe’s house was dark. From a cord around his neck he produced a key and silently handed it to Bob.

“Where’s your mother, Joe ?” asked Margery. The darkness and emptiness of Joe’s house leaked out through its walls.

“My mother’s away.”

¹⁸ gliding or skimming along, touching a surface at intervals

¹⁹ to walk laboriously

²⁰ walking without properly lifting the feet from the ground

²¹ the surface soil of land good for cultivation

"Away where?"

"I dunno. It's okay — I can take care of myself!"

"Where's your father?" asked Bob.

"Working. He always works."

Margery and Bob exchanged a look that in the dark was more felt than seen.

"Well," said Bob, "I'm leaving your father a note telling him where to find you. You're coming home with us."

"I can take care of myself," Joe mumbled again, but without conviction. He seemed relieved.

Peter, who had been watching Joe with deepening respect, walked beside him on the way home. "You can play with my robot," he offered.

Margery fed them sandwiches and soup at the kitchen table and sat with them, shelling peas and taking quick, secret looks at her guest.

Joe was one of those children whose skin seems both dark and pale --- the paleness deep, the dark an overtone. Shadows ran up his thin wrists and down along the hollows of his neck, under his ears. Motherhood moved uneasily within her. Dirt, she told herself. He needs a bath, that's all. Poor kid, poor little animal. She felt as if the boys in the garden had come back and thrown in something more complicated than a football, done something more ruinous than climb through her roses.

"Now, you two run along upstairs and play quietly in Peter's room," she told them when they had finished. "I'll call you when your father comes, Joe."

She and Bob ate by candlelight at the polished table in the dining room.

"He seems a nice little kid," said Bob. "Quiet. Wonder if his mother's gone for good?"

"Poor mite,²² with his key around his neck."

"Peter doesn't travel much with that bunch, does he? The boys from the new houses?"

She shook her head. "He says they're rough."

"I expect they are."

Margery looked around her dining room and felt, for the first time, guilty of her own wealth. They were not rich; they had no servants, no

²² tiny object, especially, a small child

private income, and she did all her own housework and gardening. But she did have this grace of life, this pride and sureness, that made her house what it was. And she had inherited them, just as certainly as one might inherit a fortune or a diamond necklace. If she had been born in Joe's house, or had been a sister of the boys in the garden, she would not have been Margery, but someone else.

It was a simple thought. She had read it often enough. But its reality surprised her.

By the time Joe's father arrived it was after nine, and Margery had almost decided to put the boys to bed together.

Bob invited him in. He stood in the hallway, a tired, honest man, uncertain whether or not to be angry.

Margery came forward smiling. "Can we offer you a cup of coffee?"

He shook his head. "Where's my boy?"

"Upstairs. He'll be right down. He came to Peter's birthday party", she explained, unable to stop smiling, "and we invited him to stay for supper."

The man nodded. He doesn't believe me, she thought. Why should he?

"I was wondering," she went on bravely, "while his mother's away — I mean, until she comes — may be Joe could come over here to play with Peter in the evenings. Until you get home from work. We'd be happy to have him."

"The lady next door looks after him," said Joe's father. "Mrs. Riera. She keeps an eye on him."

"Of course. I see. Well..."

Joe and Peter came tumbling down the stairs. "Daddy," called Joe. "Come on up and see Peter's train. Can I have a train for Christmas? It has signal lights and a whistle and everything." He pulled at his father's hand. "And he got a robot for his birthday that really walks!"

"We have to get home," said his father. "It's late. You've been here long enough." And he turned grudgingly to Margery and Bob. "Thank you," he said hesitantly.

"So long," said Peter. "See you."

"Yeah. See you," said Joe.

"Come back, Joe," said Margery. "Come back any time."

Joe and his father crossed the lighted porch and went down the steps into the dark. Margery stood at the screen door, listening as their footsteps faded away. Then she turned slowly back into the light of her own house, which was no longer a fortress and no longer a safe place to hide from the sorrows and confusion outside. No higher fence for the garden or gate for the driveway could ever make it safe again.

—*Barbara Holland*

EXERCISES

A

Answer the following questions in single sentences as far as possible.

1. Why did Margery experience blackness in front of her eyes ?
2. Why did Margery's neighbours envy her ?
3. Why did the neighbourhood boys enter Margery's garden ?
4. Why was Margery scared standing in her own garden ?
5. Why was Margery not able to count Peter's friends who had come to the party ?
6. Why did Margery scream when she switched on the kitchen light ?
7. What kind of a man was Joe's father ?
8. Who was Mrs. Riera ?

B

Answer the following questions in detail.

1. Give examples from the text to show that Margery's house was tastefully decorated ?
2. Describe the condition of the houses in Margery's neighbourhood when she was a child.
3. Why was Margery so devoted to her house ?
4. Was the world outside known to Margery and her husband ? If not, how did they come to know of it ?
5. At the end of the story, why did Margery feel that her house was no longer a very safe fortress ?

15. The Legend of Pygmalion

[Pygmalion was the king of Cypress. He was a sculptor who created beautiful statues out of stone and ivory. One day he made an extremely beautiful statue of a woman. So great was the beauty of this piece that Pygmalion fell madly in love with it.

Day after day, nay, hour after hour, Pygmalion wished that his stone figure would come to life. At last the wish was granted by Aphrodite (also known as Venus), the goddess of love and beauty in Greek mythology. Did the miracle make Pygmalion happy ?]

When Pygmalion had finished that statue he smiled. It was the innocent smile of a child at having found something new and unique. Of course, the piece of sculpture was perfect, almost unsurpassable¹. So greatly was he impressed by the beauty of the statue that he felt like falling down on his knees in the posture² of worship before it. Although his studio was full of a number of stone creations he realised that he had never done anything like that before. In fact he had created a masterpiece. He named this beauty Galatea.

Evening came and Pygmalion still sat in his studio, looking at the beautiful Galatea in the fading



¹ that which cannot be excelled ; matchless

² a specific position or pose of the body

light. He had no desire to move away, instead he climbed up the pedestal³ and gave the stone lips of the statue a kiss, wishing it alive. He soon realised the stupidity of this act and lowered his eyes in shame. And lo the eyes blinked and the miracle took place ! Galatea came to life in the arms of Pygmalion. Venus, the goddess of love had granted the artist's wish.

Galatea did not speak ; she smiled with an expression of astonishment upon her radiant⁴ face. Like a child she stretched out a hand to touch Pygmalion's hair. As she parted the dark locks she laughed. It was a clear laugh. He spoke a few words and for the first time the smooth forehead wrinkled in an effort to understand.

Galatea was soon asleep because moving life is more tiring than a motionless masterpiece of sculpture. In flesh and blood she did not look a goddess but a sad thing seeking the shelter of love. All night Pygmalion kept watch over this tender life. Next morning when she woke up she did not speak. Pygmalion took up the role of a teacher and a guide. Standing, she always looked like a goddess. And Pygmalion felt so proud, for he could create, like God, in flesh and blood ; or so he thought. For sometime he lived with Galatea — almost happy.

As time passed signs of age and weariness started showing in Galatea's appearance. This made Pygmalion very unhappy for, like the true artist that he was, he believed that beautiful creations must remain permanent. He was afraid that his beautiful creation would eventually grow old and perish. And he did not like this idea. Galatea also seemed tired of life, for the pain and suffering of living was a bit too much for her to bear. She used to compare herself with the marble statues in the studio. She realised that stone that knows neither grief nor age was permanent, and she wished to die.

Pygmalion foresaw her inevitable⁵ fate and when night came he took his chisel and struck her bosom a blow. He saw a second miracle : Galatea was returning to the original marble. All that night he chiselled in an effort to give a new shape to the stone. Next morning what he saw in the daylight was something quite different, compared to the original.

³ a base or support for a statue or pillar, etc.

⁴ beaming with light or brightness, kindness or love

⁵ that which cannot be avoided or prevented from happening

The lips had lost their great beauty ; the eyes told of the grief of living ; the whole body was bent towards the earth. In brief, the whole night, in the dark, he had been sculpting the very face of grief.

And Pygmalion wept.

EXERCISES

Answer the following questions.

A

1. Why did Pygmalion smile when he had finished the statue ?
2. Why didn't the artist like to leave the studio after he had completed the beautiful statue ?
3. What was Pygmalion's desire after he had created the beautiful Galatea in marble and who granted it ?
4. How did he feel when the stone Galatea turned into a beautiful, living woman ?
5. Why did Galatea find life a tiring business ?
6. What made Pygmalion unhappy after his wish was fulfilled ?
7. Why did Pygmalion weep after he had given a completely different shape to the marble Galatea ?

B

1. Beauty is perfect. Can any improvement change it ?